

## VICE AND FRIENDSHIP IN ARISTOTLE

VICE AND FRIENDSHIP IN ARISTOTLE

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the  
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## LAY ABSTRACT:

According to Aristotle, can vicious people have genuine friendships? This thesis examines Aristotle's theory of vice and friendship to determine the capacity that vicious people have for genuine friendships in Aristotle's view. I will argue that all three kinds of Aristotelian friendships involve both instrumental motivations *and* well-wishing for the friend's own sake. This means Aristotle's incomplete friendships are genuine friendships on his view, as well as in the modern sense of the word. I argue the best way to interpret Aristotle's account of vice is to understand his claims about vice to be in reference to two different kinds of vicious people, one principled and one conflicted. Accepting that Aristotle outlined two different kinds of vicious people in the ethics, I will argue that it is an implication of Aristotle's view that *some* vicious people can have friendships of all three kinds.

## ABSTRACT:

This thesis will contribute to a more charitable understanding of Aristotle's view on friendship, as it challenges the philosophical orthodoxy which holds Aristotle as denying the possibility of genuine friendships between vicious people. Chapter 1 examines the different interpretations of Aristotle's vicious person to determine which interpretation best captures the entirety of Aristotle's claims regarding vice. I argue that if we wish to bring together all of his claims into a cohesive interpretation, the best interpretation is a dual account of vice. Any concern of inconsistency can be avoided by adopting this interpretation of two distinct kinds of vicious people. In Chapter 2, I consider Aristotelian incomplete friendships of utility and pleasure, and if they ought to be considered friendships in the modern sense. I argue that these friendships are instrumental, but that they also include well-wishing for the friend's own sake, and as such do count as friendship in the modern sense. Further, as all scholars agree Aristotle held vicious people can have incomplete friendships, this means vicious people can wish others well for their own sake. In Chapter 3, I distinguish between complete and character friendships by adopting John Cooper's view. I argue that vicious people should be included in those who can have character friendships, and that they can befriend each other based on bad traits, that they mistakenly hold to be good. As such I argue that character friendships are formed on account of the apparent good, and so, *some* vicious people, in Aristotle's view can have *genuine* friendships of all three kinds.

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## LIST OF ABBRIVIATIONS

NE – *Nicomachean Ethics*

EE – *Eudemian Ethics*

PVP – Principled Vicious Person

CVP – Conflicted Vicious Person

## Introduction

In this thesis, I will be exploring the relationship between Aristotle's account of viciousness and his account of friendship, in order to argue that it is in line with Aristotle's account that principled vicious people can have character friendships, as well as utility and pleasure friendships. This is an interesting avenue to consider because while many scholars consider the possibility of friendships between bad people and their choiceworthiness<sup>1</sup>, there is little serious consideration of *Aristotle's* vicious person and their capacity to have anything more than Aristotelian incomplete friendships of utility or pleasure. Friendship is a large part of Aristotle's ethics and has been examined by numerous scholars, however vicious friendships, especially vicious character friendships have, in my opinion, been underexamined. Interpretations of Aristotle's vicious agent differ greatly, many of which discount *all* vicious people from character friendships. However, if we accept a dual account of vice, which I propose best fits Aristotle's view, then there is strong evidence in support of the possibility of vicious character friendships if we accept that non-virtuous people can have character-based friendships. The main point of interest is that this thesis is challenging an orthodoxy. It is commonly held that Aristotle argued that vicious people cannot have genuine friendships, as they are limited to utility and pleasure friendships, which many hold to not count as genuine friendships for Aristotle or in the modern sense of the word<sup>2</sup>. I will be

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<sup>1</sup> Alexis Elder, "Why Bad People Can't Be Good Friends."; Jessica Isserow, "On Having Bad Persons as Friends."; Cathay Mason, "What's Bad about Friendship with Bad People?"

<sup>2</sup> John Cooper, "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship". While generous with whom he argues Aristotle holds can have a genuine Aristotelian friendship, Cooper explicitly excludes vicious people from character friendships. Similarly, Corinne Gartner, "Aristotle on Love and Friendship", argues that Aristotle held thoroughly bad agents

challenging this position in two ways. First, I will argue that utility and pleasure friendships, as Aristotle understands them do count as friendships in the modern sense of the word. Second, I will argue, against most scholars, that *some* vicious people are capable of having character friendships.

This thesis will argue for four main claims. The first claim is that according to Aristotle there are two distinct kinds of vicious people. There is some debate around Aristotle's vicious person and whether his account of vice is consistent. In Chapter 1, I will argue that *all* of Aristotle's remarks about the vicious person can be understood as consistent if we take him as discussing two different types of vicious person, that is, the vicious person is either a principled vicious person (PVP) *or* a conflicted vicious person (CVP). A PVP is the vicious person who follows their principles and thinks they are right to do so. By contrast, a CVP is the vicious person who tends to regret their actions and knows they are wrong. Second, I will argue that Aristotelian *philia* is friendship in the modern sense. While many people, such as Alexander Nehamas, argue that *philia* and friendship in the modern sense are

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are incapable of the other-regarding concern necessary for genuine friendships. Arina Pismenny and Berit Brogaard, *Vices of Friendship*, while they reject Aristotle's view on friendship, they maintain that he held genuine friendships to be between virtuous agents. Likewise, Alexander Nehamas, "The Good of Friendship", argues against Aristotle's view on friendship, but argues that Aristotelian incomplete friendships of utility and pleasure cannot be counted as a modern friendship, and further the only friendships that were true friendships for Aristotle are those between virtuous agents. Nehamas explicitly discusses bad people's capacity for friendship being contradictory to Aristotle's view. While Jessica Isserow, "On Having Bad Persons as Friends", also argues against Aristotle's view regarding genuine friendship, she interprets Aristotelian genuine friendships as being between virtuous people. Donald Schroeder, "Aristotle on the Good of Virtue-Friendship", holds that the only true friendship for Aristotle is virtue friendship, as only in this friendship do the friends truly love the other. The following scholars also held that Aristotle did not support genuine, strong vicious friendships: Matthew Walker, "Aristotle on the Utility and Choiceworthiness of Friends", George Nakhnikian, "Love and Human Reason", Kristján Kristjánsson, "Grounding Depp Friendships: Reconciling the Moralized and Aestheticized Views", Mark Alfano, "Friendship and the Structure of Trust".

distinct, in that Aristotelian incomplete friendships are too instrumental to count as modern friendship, I will emphasize that all Aristotelian friendships involve both instrumental motivations *and* well-wishing for their friend's own sake. Connected to this, I will also argue, third, that all three types of friendship involve well-wishing for the friend's own sake. Admittedly, for Aristotle, pleasure and utility friendships are more instrumental and have more limits to how much they can wish another well in comparison to character-based friendships. However, incomplete friendships are still friendships that involve mutual reciprocated goodwill and thus can be recognized as a friendship in the modern sense. My fourth main claim is that *some* vicious people can have all three kinds of Aristotelian friendships, including not only utility and pleasure friendships as is commonly supposed, but also character friendships.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. In Chapter 1, I will consider how to best interpret Aristotle's vicious person. To do this, I will first consider the brutish person, and what constitutes the difference between brutishness and viciousness. Here I will clarify that the difference lies in the sorts of things they take pleasure in. A brutish person enjoys unnatural pleasures - cannibalism, and other things which are always wrong to any degree, whereas vicious people enjoy natural pleasures, but to an excess or deficiency. I will then consider several common interpretations that attempt to deal with the concern that Aristotle was inconsistent in the way he characterized the vicious person. Of these, I will examine the three most prominent existing interpretations, which are as follows: (1) Aristotle does present an inconsistent account of vice, (2) Aristotle's account is consistent, and the vicious person is either principled *or* conflicted, and (3) Aristotle's account is consistent, and the vicious person goes through different stages. I will argue for a fourth interpretation, which is that

Aristotle held that there are two different types of vicious people. The apparent inconsistency is due to him describing these different kinds of vicious people: one conflicted and the other principled.

In Chapter 2, I will argue that Aristotelian incomplete friendships are friendships in the modern sense, contrary to what Alexander Nehamas argues. I will position myself with John Cooper, who argues utility and pleasure friendships involve both instrumental well-wishing *and* well-wishing for the friend's own sake. While Aristotle clearly stated that vicious people can have incomplete friendships, there is a debate over whether well-wishing for others is required in this kind of friendship, and if so, to what degree. Due to this, one might question if incomplete friendships of utility and pleasure involve well-wishing for the friend's own sake, as Cooper argues and I support, and if vicious people are capable of this. Once we determine the degree of well-wishing involved in utility and pleasure friendships, we will then consider vicious people and their ability to have these kinds of friendships. I will argue that *all* vicious people can wish others well for their own sake, albeit to a more limited degree than non-vicious people can. As a result, Aristotelian friendships of both pleasure and utility, which (as all agree) Aristotle thought vicious people can have, can reasonably be considered friendships in the modern sense of the word.

In Chapter 3, I will argue that it is implied by Aristotle's view that *some* vicious people can have character-based friendships. I will begin by considering John Cooper's distinction between complete friendships and character friendships<sup>3</sup>. He argues that Aristotle presents cases of character-based friendships between non-virtuous people (character

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<sup>3</sup> The distinction between complete and character friends is one I am using for clarity, wherein character friends denote character-based friendships between non-virtuous agents, and complete friendships denotes character-based friendships between virtuous agents.

friendships), as well as character-based friendships between virtuous people (complete friendships). I will use this distinction to develop the idea that vicious people have the capacity to have character friendships. I will consider the different possible ways in which a vicious character friendship might be formed: (1) based on the vicious person's good traits, (2) based on the appearance of good traits the vicious person pretends to possess, and (3) based upon the vicious person's bad character. I will contend that the most probable way in which a vicious person might befriend another person based on their character will be on account of genuinely bad traits that they mistakenly believe are good. As Aristotelian character-based friendships are based on the *apparent* (not actual) good, this will allow me to argue that a PVP can befriend someone on account of their bad character. I will conclude this chapter by tackling passages from Aristotle that seem to deny vicious character friendships, as well as further concerns that arise from accepting this as consistent with Aristotle's view. On the whole, this thesis establishes that *some* vicious people have the capacity to have friendships of all three kinds in Aristotle's view. Further, *all* vicious people have the capacity to wish another well for their own sake, which means they are not limited to purely instrumental relationships.

Before we begin Chapter 1, we will briefly consider what is a significant difference between the *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* relationship between incomplete and complete friendships. There are differences in how Aristotle treats friendship, and how incomplete and complete friendships relate in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle seems to suggest that only complete friendships are actual friendship, whereas utility and pleasure friendships are merely called friendships. By contrast, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, he is more willing to call all three kinds of friendship

genuine friendship. I maintain that the difference between these two works is not significant in any way which would impact or undermine my argument. For the purpose of this thesis, I will accept Marco Zingano's interpretation of the difference between Aristotle's accounts of the kinds of friendship in these two works. In his paper "The Conceptual Unity of Friendship in the *Eudemian* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*", Zingano argues that Aristotle presents two distinct explanations in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* to account for and unify the three different kinds of friendship. Zingano first discusses the *Eudemian Ethics*' focal account of friendship, where he claims that for each genus, there is only one contrariety, any other contraries are within the same genus and reduced to the more basic. This asserts an item as first/superior (complete friendship) in a given hierarchy and eliminates the others (utility and pleasure friendships) from first (Zingano 210). Meanwhile, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle drops the focal account of friendship in favour of a resemblance and hierarchy account (Zingano 212). In this account utility and pleasure friendships resemble and are friendships due to their resemblance to the best kind, complete friendship. This resemblance allows for a connection because of a hierarchy, that arises from nesting the types of friendship, wherein complete friendships are the best, and incomplete are lesser friendships, but friendships all the same. Zingano argues that Aristotle draws on these two accounts to unify friendship and that unlike what others suggest, the *Nicomachean Ethics* does not count only complete friendships as genuine friendship. If Zingano is right about this, as I believe he is, then incomplete friendships within the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* are genuine friendships for Aristotle. In conclusion, if my arguments in this thesis are accepted, it turns out, contrary to what most scholars have supposed, that Aristotle theory is open to the possibility that *some* vicious people have the capacity for genuine friendships.

# Chapter 1: Vice

## Introduction

In this chapter, I will argue that Aristotle's conception of the vicious person is not inconsistent, nor is it reducible to a single type of vicious person as others have supposed, but rather that Aristotle thought viciousness can exist and express itself in different ways. In other words, a vicious person may be principled, but a different, equally vicious person might instead be conflicted. Dealing with this issue is relevant to the overall project because it gives us a strong understanding of who the vicious person is before trying to understand them in relation to others. Examining Aristotle's views on the nature of vice provides context for understanding why his view supports genuine vicious friendships, as I shall argue it does in the later chapters, even if it is not common. I will explore the different common interpretations of Aristotle's vicious person. There is a debate on what Aristotle's vicious person looks like due to the fact that it seems Aristotle gives conflicting accounts. The common interpretations of the different passages regarding viciousness give rise to an impression that Aristotle considers two types of vicious agents: the conflicted vicious person (CVP), and the principled vicious person (PVP)<sup>4</sup>. First, I will explore the main books<sup>5</sup> where Aristotle speaks of vice and see how they differ from one another. Then, I will look at the different interpretations of the vicious person and highlight their failings before moving on to my own view.

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<sup>4</sup> I have adopted these labels and abbreviations from Müller (2015).

<sup>5</sup> This paper will not take any stance regarding the common books, for simplicity's sake I will refer to them as they appear in the NE. Meaning EE book IV, V, and VI will be referred to as NE book V, VI, and VII



## **Vice in the *NE* and *EE***

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle first speaks of vice in depth in book III, where he speaks on intemperance regarding appetites. Aristotle states that the intemperate person is driven by their appetite (NE 1117b10-15) and desires the pleasant/pleasantest of things at any cost; they are pained both by their appetite for these things as well as any failure to get them (NE 1119a5). The intemperate person acts voluntarily with the aim of satiating their appetites, so their actions are voluntary and blameworthy. However, to become intemperate is not something one desires, so falling into this state is involuntary, whereas the state itself is voluntary (NE 1119a 30).

In book IX, Aristotle describes the vicious person in regard to others and friendship. This description of the vicious person seemingly aligns with the vicious person Aristotle described in book III and differs from the vicious person laid out in book VII. In book IX, Aristotle claims that base people rarely have friends because they themselves are at odds due to their contrasting appetites and desires. He states they, “have an appetite for one thing and wish for another, as incontinent people do” (NE 1167a15), “his soul is in conflict, and because he is vicious one <part> is distressed at being restrained, and another is pleased <by the intended action>; and so each <part> pulls in a different direction, as though tearing him apart” (NE 1167a25)<sup>6</sup>. Aristotle states that vicious person chases what they find pleasant but not good for themselves; chasing these apparent pleasures and, because of their character deficits (whether laziness or cowardice), leaves them to not go for what they believe is the good for themselves. Aristotle states, “those who have done many terrible actions hate and flee from life

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6 Aristotle. 2019. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Edited by Terance Irwin. Hackett Publishing Company, INC.

because of their vice, and destroy themselves” (NE 1167a20). They are aware they are seeking the wrong things and, in doing so, have done and acted wrongly, which causes them to flee from life because they hate and resent it. Instead of having peace with themselves, vicious people as depicted in NE IX are at odds when alone and reflect on their past and future errors, which leaves them striving for the company of others, to avoid any self-reflection. They are unlovable and cannot have friendly feelings towards themselves, let alone others. They regret their own vicious nature and wish they did not enjoy the things they do (NE 1166a10-1167a25). The vicious person here is conflicted and in turmoil; they know they are vicious or at least acting wrongly; they are incapable of having friendly feelings. Both book III and IX point towards the conflicted vicious person (CVP), who tends to regret their actions, and who is in many ways, very *similar* to the incontinent person.

By contrast, in book VII, Aristotle outlines intemperance by *contrasting* it with incontinence. Incontinence, but not intemperance involves knowing one is acting wrongly but being unable to resist, so the incontinent person’s appetites draw them into acting against their reason (NE 1147a20, NE 1150b30-1151a5). On the other hand, the intemperate person does not know that they are vicious, or that they are acting viciously, because they act in accordance with what they think is the right action, and so they do not regret it. Where the incontinent person is warring with themselves and does not act with decision, the vicious person is the opposite (NE 1151a5). The corruption of correct reason involves being mistaken about the right act, so a vicious person is so overtaken that they believe that acting without restraint for pleasure’s sake is right, whereas the incontinent person is not so far corrupted and can recognize their appetites are wrong, which is, in part, why one is curable and the other is not. In NE VII Aristotle said that: the vicious person does not know they are vicious, acts in accordance with

decision believing they are right to do so, rarely regrets their actions or choices, cannot be cured, are the type of person to persuade it is best to ‘pursue excessive bodily pleasures against correct reason, has a corrupted ruling principle, and has abandoned correct reason so they are bad without qualification. This all points towards the principled vicious person (PVP), who tends not to regret their actions. Hence, Aristotle’s account of the nature of vice in Book VII seems quite different from his account of the nature of vice in Books III and IX.

Moving on to the *Eudemian Ethics*; in book II Aristotle states that the undisciplined man has corrupted their correct reason and is so taken by pleasure that they believe they ought to act only for pleasure, as Aristotle states, “one who is appetitive and excessive in all the relevant ways is undisciplined” (EE 1221a)<sup>7</sup>. He draws the same connection between intemperance and incontinence here as he does in NE book VII: “Those who lack self-control are neither undisciplined nor temperate” (EE 1231a25). The only mention of conflicting desires and appetites arises with the continent or incontinent person, which points to a PVP. However, in EE book VII, when Aristotle discusses friendship, he seemingly gives examples which could align with a CVP or a PVP conception of vice. For instance, he states, “A base person and one of bad character is suspicious of everyone, since he measures others by himself” (EE 1237b30). This could imply that the vicious person is aware they are wrong, so they expect others to wrong them and act badly, which would support a CVP interpretation of vice. Alternatively, it could be the case that the vicious person believes themselves to be good, but can recognize that their principles involve acting for their best interests, not others, so they expect others also to use them for their benefit, which would support a PVP interpretation of vice. So, seemingly

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<sup>7</sup> Aristotle. 2013. *Eudemian Ethics*. Edited by Raphael Woolf Brad Inwood. Cambridge University Press.

unlike the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where there are clear cases supporting a CVP or a PVP interpretation of vice throughout, the *Eudemian Ethics* has no examples that definitively support a CVP interpretation.

There are some features Aristotle consistently associates with vice, such as it is an incurable, unqualifiable bad state, etc, but there are also differences, notably the vicious person's awareness of their badness, whether they are principled, etc. Commentators have focused on the differences, often concluding that Aristotle's account of the nature of vice is inconsistent. There have also been many attempts by interpreters of Aristotle to reconcile this seeming inconsistency in his works. I will explore the three most common approaches before I lay out my interpretation of this matter.

### **Vice VS Brutishness**

Before we can examine the seeming inconsistency in Aristotle's works regarding vice, we must examine his views on the difference between vice and brutishness. That is, we need to see what falls within vice, and what surpasses it. Aristotle contrasts brutishness with its opposite to unpack what it is. Brutishness's oppositional state is that of godlikeness, which is a state that transcends virtue; both of these states are seemingly equally rare (EE 1145a24). Brutishness can arise in different ways or take different forms, it is most commonly found among barbarians/foreigners, but it can result from deformity or disease (EE 1145a30, NE 1145b30). Aristotle presents twelve cases of brutishness. In his article "Aristotle on Brutishness", John Thorp examines each case of brutishness that Aristotle presents and summarizes them all as irrational and inhuman. Thorp states that these cases range from "savage behaviour from semi-imaginary remote tribes; on the other, violent psychopathic behaviour; and, finally, neuroses, phobias, and compulsions" (Thorp 677). Thorp points to a

distinction within brutishness, which is that of “brutish vice” and “brutish akrasia”. Thorp states that rather than there being three states to avoid (brutishness, vice and incontinence), there are technically four if we consider his twofold account of brutishness. Some brutishness seems to stem from an inhuman level in incontinence (NE 1149a16) whereas the other from inhuman level of vice (NE 148b32). What exactly makes something brutish akrasia instead of brutish vice is unclear (Thorp 679).

The clear difference between brutishness and vice is that vice applies to humans, whereas those who are brutish are beyond the human level of vice, such that vice and virtue no longer apply to them. If we look at the examples of brutishness provided by Aristotle, cannibalism is a recurring theme in his examples (overtly in four of the twelve examples). Brutes desire unnatural things like cannibalism, whereas vicious people, in comparison, have desires for natural goods, things which, if enjoyed at the right time or in the right way, would not be harmful, but there is no way for one to enjoy cannibalism in the right way, as it is in itself unnatural (Thorp 681-682). The main point of relevance here is that the type of goods that interest the vicious person differs significantly from the type of goods that interest the brutish person. This means that if we can determine that the appetite is for natural goods, then it is not a case of brutishness, but instead a case of vice or incontinence. We are now equipped to distinguish the vicious from the brutish and move forward in our examination of vice.

### **Common Interpretations of Seeming Inconsistencies**

Throughout his works, Aristotle seems to present conflicting accounts of the vicious person. An example is the apparent difference in how the vicious person perceives their actions. As we have seen there are remarks that paint the vicious person as thinking their desires and actions are correct, just like the virtuous person does; however, the vicious person is mistaken

about the good whereas the virtuous person is correct. On the other hand, Aristotle also states the vicious person regrets their actions and knows they are wrong, so there is conflict between their actions and desires, like the incontinent person. These claims seem difficult to bring together into a cohesive account of vice, and so the issue of this possible inconsistent account of the vicious person arises. There are three common approaches of engaging with this issue, which are as follows: (1) to say that the account Aristotle gives of viciousness and the vicious person is inconsistent, (2) that there is a consistent definition of the vicious person, and the seeming inconsistency can be understood by appealing to a single type of vicious person (either a CVP or a PVP), or (3) that the vicious person goes through stages in becoming vicious, and they devolve through the different types.

David Roochnik holds the first stance; that Aristotle was inconsistent with his account of vice. Jozef Müller, and Karen Neilson align with the second approach; with Müller arguing that a CVP conception is the proper understanding of the vicious person, while Neilson argues that Müller is incorrect, and the vicious person must be principled. Thomas Brickhouse is an example of approach three, he argues that there is a transformative element to vice, and the vicious person goes through stages. Brickhouse argues Aristotle was consistent and tried to highlight the different stages of vice. I will now examine each of the three interpretations, before moving onto my stance.

### **(1) Vice as inconsistent**

First, we will examine Roochnik, who states that Aristotle does, in fact, provide conflicting accounts of the vicious person. However, Roochnik argues that this is due to the nature of the vicious person being so hard to comprehend from the stance of a morally superior person, like those who are studying ethics. He argues that the vicious people of book VII and

book IX are presented too differently to be in reference to the same sort of person. In other words, Aristotle does not present a single, clear example, or type, of vicious person. Roochnik suggests that the vicious person outlined in book VII acts without regret and with intent, whereas book IX describes a miserable, vicious person in turmoil with their actions (Roochnik 210-212). Roochnik's description of the vicious person in each book aligns with how we examined the vicious person above: book VII described a principled vicious person, whereas book IX outlines a vicious person who is conflicted. Hence Roochnik writes:

This difficulty is acknowledged by the shift from the book VII account to that found in book IX, in which the vicious man, having become regretful, is thereby "normalized" or "humanized." The same difficulty is implicitly acknowledged in the moral typology, where the temptation is felt to describe the man without regret as a "monster," and thus as brutish rather than vicious (Roochnik 217).

Roochnik suggests this inconsistency in Aristotle's account of vice arises because a vicious person who does not regret their actions seems subhuman, and thus brutish. However, if the vicious person feels regret, they do not seem very vicious. So, it is difficult to find a mean of sorts between the brute and the incontinent person, for vice to fall. Roochnik argues it is challenging to adequately present the vicious person, as they are much worse than the everyday person, yet they are not brutish (Roochnik 217). Roochnik states that while Aristotle provides an inconsistent account, it is forgivable, or rather, that it may serve a purpose, namely, to highlight the mysterious nature of the vicious person. He suggests that Aristotle's goal may not have been to provide an account of the vicious person themselves, but rather an account of how we, as non-vicious people, understand them, or rather struggle to (Roochnik 217-218).

I believe Roochnik's explanation fails in several ways. The first issue with Roochnik's interpretation is that Aristotle outlines brutishness as more removed from normal people than viciousness is (EE 1145a), so if we cannot comprehend viciousness, we should have the same

issue with brutishness. Aristotle states that while brutishness might not be the worst state, as there is a sense in which viciousness is a more significant failure because the vicious person's reason and conception of the good becomes corrupted, whereas the brute's is simply absent (EE 1150a5). Surely, brutishness is far more unfathomable to understand if Aristotle's goal was to represent these states by the reader's ability to understand and relate to them. Any reader would have more luck understanding a corrupted human than they would a brute because while they might be unable to cause as much harm, they are not human in the same way as average people, or even vicious people are (EE 1150a5). The second issue is if Aristotle was trying to show vice as something beyond understanding, it stands out that there is not an inconsistency of his description of vice within certain chapters, but only when the whole is compared, which we will touch more on later. Further, vice is but one state of six, and Aristotle seemingly gives the other five similar treatment to each other, so why, of these six states, is vice the only one that is not descriptive? If Roochnik's explanation is accurate, then it would seem that this is the method Aristotle took with the other states, but that seems unlikely. While it may be the case that vice is not an easily understood state for those who are outside of it (and arguably within it), that does not mean it cannot be understood broadly in terms of what it is, if not how it is experienced. If we treat Aristotle's character states as oppositional, as he describes them, then surely what is too bad for us to understand would also affect our understanding of the good. To argue otherwise, seems an ungenerous treatment of the readers and their capacity. Overall, this interpretation seems to be an attempt to avoid ascribing Aristotle an *unintentionally* inconsistent account.

Another concern with Roochnik's interpretation is that Aristotle does well to present a clear and consistent picture of vice, and the vicious person within each book. It is only when you compare certain books to each other that any issues arise with conflicts. It is not that



Aristotle presents an unclear picture of the vicious person when he discusses them in any given place, but rather between the different books there are some conflicts. So, it is unclear why he would be inconsistent across the different books and not also within them if he was trying to illustrate the mysterious nature of the vicious person. Furthermore, Aristotle seemingly presents a single type of vicious person throughout the *Eudemian Ethics*. This means he either believes the readers of the *Eudemian Ethics* can understand vice more than the readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics* can, or he is trying to describe viciousness as it actually is, and not as the morally superior person can understand it. So, I hold that Roochnik fails to present strong evidence for why Aristotle would be *intentionally* inconsistent with his account of vice.

## **(2) Vice as Consistent**

### **CVP Interpretation**

In contrast to those who claim Aristotle is inconsistent, Müller argues that Aristotle's outline and description of the vicious person throughout his works can be understood as a single, cohesive type, namely as a CVP. Müller argues that a PVP interpretation is a misrepresentation of Aristotle's conception of viciousness (Müller 3). He holds that a CVP interpretation is the only justified conception of Aristotle's vicious agent. Müller maintains that there is the most in-text support for a CVP interpretation. He raises the relation of states of character to argue this. Vice is the opposite of virtue, which means, vice is as undesirable as virtue is desirable. He argues vice is undesirable because the soul lacks unity. The state of vice can be stated as "a discord between reason and desires of such pervasive extent that the non-rational desires would not listen to reason at all" (Müller 4). Müller connects this to a CVP, and claims that throughout the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the vicious person is like the incontinent but worse because their reason is fully corrupted, so they are in turmoil and unlovable (Müller 4). The vicious person

is so unstable, that their conception of the good is fluid and changes often. This means they may chase what is pleasant, but it does not mean they have any *principled* reason to do so. Müller argues that the vicious person does *not* have a principled idea of what they hold is good and should take, as a PVP interpretation would suggest. But rather, the vicious person tends towards extremes with nothing (no conception of good) to help guide and moderate them. Müller writes,

Even her subsequent regret is based solely on the pain she herself experiences and not, as in the case of the uncontrolled agent, on her knowledge or belief (one she had before she acted) that the action was wrong or bad. If her action did not lead to pain this time, she would have no regrets. It is only afterwards when the painful consequences arise that she comes to regret her actions (or when she anticipates those consequences and her own regret) (Müller 9).

According to Müller, this is the best way to make sense of why viciousness is so awful, it is a horrible state to see and experience, and a CVP conception can account for this phenomenon best. Müller holds that a PVP interpretation fails to explain why the vicious person ought to be miserable if they can generally achieve what they want. So, Müller believes a CVP stance can properly be applied to the entirety of Aristotle's account of the vicious person, meaning there is a single cohesive way to understand the state of vice.

Müller concludes that he has shown that a PVP interpretation is not convincing when it is more the case that he has shown that everything can be understood as suggesting a CVP interpretation *if* we interpret it as he recommends. However, the reasons he gives for denying Aristotle ever depicts a PVP are not convincing. Müller lists eight passages that are commonly taken to support a PVP conception of vice and argues that they can all apply to a CVP conception of vice. Of these claims we will look at claim three and seven. Müller writes:

3. The vicious person sometimes pursues (excessive or base) pleasure even without having an appetite for it or just a mild one (NE 7.4, 1148a15-20) ... 7. The vicious person does not recognize that she is vicious (NE 7.8, 1150b32-51a7) (Müller 10).

Müller holds that claim three would not support a PVP conception of vice and instead aligns best with a CVP interpretation. He argues that it is ridiculous to presume that someone would have a principle to eat ice cream for pleasure if they did not actually desire it, so the vicious person does not have principles to go after pleasant things. He concludes this passage must refer to a CVP. Müller references Rochnik who states this means the vicious person aims for something pleasant for a reason different than appetite; perhaps they are going for the most pleasant of available options, even if they do not desire the specific thing or they are bored, curious, etc. (Müller 12). I believe Müller fails to prove this passage must refer to a CVP. Müller states, “The passage does not say that the vicious agent goes for pleasant things because of some principle(s) she holds even if these things are such that she does not feel like having them at all” (Müller 12). Having a principle like this does not necessarily mean that the vicious person thinks they ought to eat ice cream even when they don’t want ice cream because they think it will be pleasant. They can have a principle to go for pleasant things in order to entertain, distract etc, even if they do not have any strong appetite for the specific thing. That is, a vicious person could have a conception of the good (pleasure) and hold a principle such as, when possible, go after things that *might* bring pleasure even if they are not appealing in the moment. Müller may be right that a principle to go after pleasure for pleasure’s sake when the specific is not appealing is nonsense, however, going after something that might bring some sort of pleasure, even if the specific thing is not initially appealing, is a rational and seemingly sensible principle to have if one has a specific aim (pleasure).

Müller similarly fails to support claim seven, that is he fails to show why a lack of awareness of one’s own viciousness cannot apply to a PVP. He argues that if a vicious person had a conception of the good, and could reflect on their own actions, then they would surely notice that their conception of good differs from that of the general public. So, if they were

able to remain unknowingly vicious, they would be publicly shamed for their behavior, meaning they cannot reflect on good and bad *and* be vicious (Müller 12-13). I believe there is a simple counter to this which can take two parts. First, often people are able to maintain a view against the majority, whether it is good or bad. Secondly, if they recognize that their conception of good was different from the majority, it is very likely that they would be capable of fitting in if they wanted to while still believing that the majority is mistaken. If they do not fit in and are publicly shamed, that won't do anything to change them since they are vicious, and so they cannot leave this state. In all likelihood, they would still maintain the majority is wrong. We can use an example to illustrate, let's consider a glutton who holds that it is always good to devour as much food as possible. They would likely see that others, who hold temperance to be proper, as wrong, while believing themselves to be correct. If we take this further and say the glutton devoured an entire feast while the rest of the party was away and the party returns to see it gone, they would shame and blame the glutton. If we imagine the glutton holds a principle of satiating their appetite above all, then it would be easy to imagine any criticism would not change this nor would it make them realize that they are wrong and vicious, especially if they maintain and hold their principles. Furthermore, if we consider what Aristotle says about the relation between the mean and extreme states this concern is easily set aside:

For the brave person, for instance, appears rash in comparison to the coward, and the cowardly in comparison to the rash person; the temperate person appears intemperate in comparison to the insensible person, and insensible in comparison with the intemperate person; and the generous appears wasteful in comparison to the ungenerous, and ungenerous in comparison to the wasteful person. That is why each of the extreme people tries to push the intermediate person to the other extreme, so that the coward, for instance, calls the brave person rash, and the rash person calls him a coward, and similarly in other cases (NE 1108b20-25).

For textual evidence, we can appeal to the above passage. We can see that the glutton would not believe themselves as gluttonous, but instead they would find those blaming them insensible and therefore incorrect. It is worth recalling here that Aristotle repeatedly claims that everyone believes that they have the correct conception of good, and that others whose conceptions conflict with theirs are wrong (EE 1240b25). So, Müller's argument fails to show that, on Aristotle's account, the vicious person lacks the ability to reflect.

Müller holds that he has successfully argued that there is no reason to hold that the vicious person is principled and that all passages used to support a PVP interpretation of vice can all be understood along the lines of a CVP interpretation of vice. However, he fails to argue against a PVP interpretation for the specific passages as discussed above. I will go further and align with Neilson in arguing that if we interpret vicious people as Müller recommends, his interpretation also fails to capture the general picture of vice presented by Aristotle. Neilson argues that Müller's CVP conception fails because of how he attempts to deal with the relationship between decision and action, specifically what happens when the good principle is destroyed or corrupted, which under Müller's reading, means they have no such principle. Neilson points to the fact that Müller's support for the ability to act on decision with no overarching principles does not reflect what Aristotle has said. Rather, this is Müller's own conception to bring these inconsistencies together, as it is clear that Aristotle states that the vicious person *does* believe they are acting rightly. So, they must have a conception of good they strive for, and to act according to this, which means they act on decision (Neilson 16-17). Neilson does not argue that we can understand the statements that outline a CVP and bring them together under a PVP conception, but she does argue for a general account which aligns with a PVP conception of vice, which we will now consider.

## **PVP Interpretation**

As I stated above, Neilson does not argue that we can understand Aristotle's statements that suggest a CVP conception as supporting a PVP conception. However, she does argue for a general account of vice which aligns with a PVP interpretation. This is because, she argues Aristotle's vicious person cannot be a mass of conflicts. Neilson argues that the vicious agent is parallel to the virtuous agent, so the criteria given for the virtuous agent can also be applied to the vicious one: knowledge, decision, and state criteria (Neilson 13). She argues that if we follow the text, Aristotle is claiming the vicious person acts and deliberates out of ignorance; that is to say, they specifically find pleasant and enjoy what deters the virtuous person. The vicious person believes they are correct and are hitting the mean, and mistakenly believe the virtuous person is incorrect. Neilson argues we can see support for this when we consider Aristotle's claim about the intemperate man who "pursues excesses of pleasant things because they are excesses and because he decides on it, for themselves and not for some further result." (NE 150a20). She argues that this passage is Aristotle emphasizing that "the virtuous person chooses virtuous acts for the sake of the very properties that make them virtuous, the vicious choose vicious acts for the sake of the very properties that make them vicious" (Neilson 14). The differentiating factor between the virtuous and vicious person according to Neilson, is not why they choose to act, as both decide on virtuous/vicious things for their own sake, but rather their knowledge, or lack of it, regarding the correct ends. Neilson argues both the virtuous *and* vicious person are able to, and *must* reflect on, and have a conception of the bad as well as the good (Neilson 13). Finally, both virtue and vice are a stable state in a sense. Both virtue and vice involve stability, in that their actions are habituated such that they cannot change by wish alone. She thinks the vicious person *can* have a stable and unchanging character without being incurably bad, as she suggests there are degrees of badness (Neilson 14).

I don't think Neilson is wrong about Aristotle's account of vice in general, but she is not focused on trying to deal with the possible conflict. Instead, she is aiming to show the best way to understand vice, considering what Aristotle says overall about states. She does not address the concerning statements in favor of a CVP interpretation that would go against her interpretation. So, what Neilson says about a PVP is fine, but I believe it is necessary to understand why Aristotle made the seemingly conflicting claims that support a CVP conception and how this ought to affect our conception of vice rather than disregarding these claims. Neilson has argued we cannot dismiss the claims that support regarding the vicious person as principled; however, she does neglect the statements that might conflict with this, or support regarding the vicious person as conflicted, so her view cannot encompass Aristotle's account of vice as a whole.

### **(3) Vice as Stages**

Brickhouse also takes the stance that Aristotle is describing a single type of viciousness. However, unlike the others who try to show that all Aristotle's remarks can be as a CVP *or* a PVP interpretation, Brickhouse argues the seemingly conflicting remarks both apply to the same vicious person but at different times. He argues that it is possible for "contradictory accounts of vice to be complementary descriptions of the different relationships between reason and appetite occurring within the vicious soul at different times" (Brickhouse 13). Brickhouse defends this claim by suggesting that being conflicted does not mean vicious people cannot have a fixed understanding of good, that is to say the conflict they have is very different from the conflict of an incontinent person. The incontinent person's conflict is between their appetite and the right conception of good, so they are taken by what they desire and act against what they know to be good (NE 1150b30-1151a5). Brickhouse suggests the vicious people's conflict

is similar in nature, not because they recognize what is good, but rather, because they may have desires which conflict with their mistaken conception of the good. The vicious person can, at times, act according to deliberation and reason, but their desires can push them to act for what is good in the moment (Brickhouse 14-15). Brickhouse begins by reminding us that habituation is required to generate a character state, to become virtuous one must act virtuously, one must act the right way with the right reasons. The same is true of the other states, in order to be intemperate or incontinent one must also habituate these states. He raises the question of how vicious people who always go for the pleasurable thing, without refraining, are able to act according to reason when the temperate person is able to do so by habitually refraining. He states this is because to always engage with pleasure is what makes the intemperate person's appetite conflict with their ruling principle. He argues that this is the case when someone engages with their appetites such that they become strong, and are able to push against, and overtake their reason (Brickhouse 19). The vicious person feels regret when their appetite overpowers their reason, and they act against their conception of the good. Brickhouse provides the example of a glutton who is excited for a feast and holds devouring the feast to be good but is unable to refrain from eating too many appetizers and ruins his appetite. The glutton's appetite makes him act prematurely and stops him from achieving the good as he conceives it. Brickhouse states that vicious people live an unpleasant life of regret because they fail to understand how always chasing appetites and their lack of control over their appetite correlate (Brickhouse 21). The people who are just vicious and have not habituated chasing every pleasure are merely bad, whereas the thoroughly bad are those who have habituated this state, and are taken over by their appetites (Brickhouse 22). So, a PVP are the vicious people who can still resist their appetites and act for their good as they conceive it, but a CVP is what they become after chasing pleasures and losing control over themselves. According to Brickhouse,



Aristotle presents viciousness and its effect over time throughout his works, and this is why his account of vice appears inconsistent.

I disagree with Brickhouse and hold that this is not a guaranteed progression of vice for Aristotle, but rather a possible one. I agree with Brickhouse's overall assessment of how a PVP could descend into a CVP, but I do not think he shows that this necessarily happens in every case. What of a PVP who is able to maintain control over their appetites more often than not, the vicious person who *can* assert their reason over their desire and does not fall into this loss of control? If we consider the glutton, it is possible that they are able to refrain from eating too many appetizers knowing they want to gorge themselves at the feast, they may sometimes fail but they refrain often enough that their will is not overtaken by appetite. Or what of the insensible vicious person who is not driven by excessive appetites? They would not follow Brickhouse's proposed progression. Further, if we consider Brickhouse's reasons for why he thinks this is a necessary progression of vice, they mainly rest on him trying to show how vice is of one overall type, without strong textual evidence. Brickhouse does not convincingly show that a PVP will *necessarily* become a CVP on Aristotle's view.

### **My Interpretation of Aristotle on Vice**

I believe that the seeming inconsistency in Aristotle's descriptions of the vicious agent arises because Aristotle is describing two *distinct* kinds of vice. Wherein one person might be vicious by losing control of themselves, but another might become more principled and lose their correct understanding of the good, both of which can happen from habituation. Before getting into my reasons, let's again consider the options to deal with this inconsistency. We could take a CVP as what Aristotle was trying to present, but as Neilson argues, a CVP interpretation cannot account for a majority of the deficient vices and some of the excessive

ones (Neilson 2). We cannot appeal to this as the complete account of vice, since it cannot fit Aristotle's account of the mean. While it seems a PVP interpretation avoids the above concern, that is, it can fit each vice, even if a CVP interpretation may fit some better. So, we have two options if we want to take this as a full account of vice. The first is to discount the passages that seems to directly contradict it, meaning we must ignore anything that solely supports a CVP conception. While this is an option, it fails to show Aristotle had a consistent account of vice, so we will move on. The second is to try and show that both can be understood together, either by bringing the statements that suggest a CVP interpretation under a PVP interpretation, or by showing how both can exist separately as they are stated and not contradict one another. There are too many direct contradictions to try and argue that all claims that suggest a CVP interpretation can be understood as a PVP interpretation, even if we just consider the statements regarding regret and principles (NE 1147a20, NE 1150b30-1151a5, NE 1166a10-1167a25). So, the final option if we want to resolve this is to show how both can be true of the vicious agent. Now, whether they must be true of the same person or if vicious people can differ comes into question. If we were to say Aristotle is describing vice as it happens to every vicious person, we arrive at Brickhouse's approach, saying both are true of the vicious person at different stages of their life. If we want to say, as I do, that what Aristotle states throughout, does, in fact, conflict because they do not refer to the same person, and, when someone becomes vicious, they can either become a CVP or a PVP, then we need to examine the statements that directly contradict each other without dismissing any of Aristotle's claims. Possibly, a vicious person can progress through these ways of being vicious as Brickhouse outlines, but whether this is an option is not relevant to my argument, so we will set it aside for the sake of clarity and focus on them as separate types of vicious people. The relevant point here is that the statements supporting interpretations of a CVP and a PVP support a different kind of vicious person.

I believe Brickhouse was correct that Aristotle is describing different sorts of viciousness when he discusses passages that support a PVP and a CVP interpretation, as well as his reasons for how someone might be vicious regarding appetitive desires. However, this is not Aristotle giving us a progressive description of one and the same person, but rather a description of vice in general, as well as the different forms it can take. If we want to accept that passages that support a PVP and a CVP conception refer to different types of vicious people, we must first briefly determine what is true of the state of vice overall, that is, what features apply to every vicious person before examining the ways in which vicious people may differ.

There are things which seemingly apply to both a PVP and a CVP, which I will argue reflect Aristotle's view of the nature of vice as a state in general. After we examine what these features are, we will turn back to how to understand those that conflict. The aspects that complement or 'fit' vice, regardless of the interpretation of more unclear passages, are that it is: an incurable/firm unchanging state (NE 1151a5), corrupts/destroy the ruling principle (NE 1150B15), is blameworthy (NE 1118b25), is concerned with natural pleasures, either to a deficit or excessive level (EE 1231a30), and is the contrary or parallel state to virtue (NE 1145b15). These features can all be applied to any vicious person without issue, so seemingly they are what applies to the vicious state overall. I take this to be the case as there is nothing about either a CVP or a PVP that would conflict with the above features. The way in which these features are expressed in a CVP or a PVP may differ slightly, but they are present throughout most, if not all, accounts of vice regardless of the interpretation. For example, how vice is parallel to virtue is different depending on whether we consider a PVP or a CVP, due to the difference in principled action. We can look back to Müller (3) and Neilson (14) and how they state this connects, but both accounts do definitively involve this aspect.

These general features of vice can be applied to any vicious person without issue as they define the vicious state overall. By contrast, once we look at the statements that support a CVP or a PVP conception, they do not necessarily support every vice. Let's consider insensibility, Neilson suggests that a CVP interpretation cannot fit with many deficient states since it is not their appetites that leads a CVP to act, and if they were less restrained, they would be closer to the mean. She further suggests that Aristotle's statements about intemperance are not necessarily applicable to vice in general (Neilson 2). This is an important consideration, especially if we want to try to bring the apparent inconsistency in line. It seems possible, and I will argue it is the case, that when Aristotle contrasts intemperance and incontinence, he is in part doing so since intemperance provides a strong contrast, but that the arguments he makes using intemperance do apply to all other vices.

If we consider the placement of statements supporting CVP and PVP interpretations, that can help us make sense of their relevance; for instance, we see statements referring to a CVP in book III and book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*; these books deal with pleasure and friendship, respectively. Support for a PVP interpretation can be found throughout the *Eudemian Ethics*, as well as in the *Nicomachean Ethics* book VII, which deals with incontinence and intemperance. It may be the case that the reason that these statements arise here is because Aristotle is using the most relevant type of vice/vicious person in order to illustrate his point. A CVP has the strongest appetite and so to speak of them in reference to pleasures would make more sense than to reference a PVP, since they are able to have minor appetites for something. So, here Aristotle was referencing the intemperate CVP since they are best suited to draw out the relationship between pleasure and regret:

The intemperate person, then, has an appetite for all the pleasant things, or rather for the pleasantest of them, and his appetite leads him to choose these at the cost of the

other things. That is why he also feels pain both when he fails to get something and when he has an appetite for it, since appetite involves pain (NE 1119a5).

This passage applies to a CVP, as they are full of regret and have strong appetites.

Meanwhile, when discussing friendship, Aristotle seemingly presents a CVP throughout, possibly because they are more like the incontinent person as they are filled with regret and unable to have pleasant feelings for themselves (NE 1166a10), which provides a stronger contrast for the friendships that the virtuous are able to have, namely complete friendships. When discussing the incontinent person, Aristotle chooses to illustrate a PVP; this is the person who, of the states to be avoided, most contrasts the incontinent. Aristotle states:

The intemperate person, as we said, is not *prone* to regret, since he abides by his decision. But *every* incontinent is prone to regret....The intemperate person is incurable, and the incontinent is curable..... for vice is a continuous bad condition, but incontinence is not (NE 1150b30-1151a5, my emphasis).

As we can see above, in book III, the intemperate person, specifically the intemperate CVP, does, in fact, regret, but the intemperate PVP does not. So, it seems Aristotle aimed to illustrate incontinence by showing how it contrasts with vice, and this would be more difficult with a CVP, as it is a very similar state to incontinence. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, a PVP seems to be illustrated throughout; that is, there are no statements that *must* refer to a CVP, and many are open such that they could refer to either conception of the vicious person. There is little here that supports either type; the discussion seems, for the most part, concerned with vice in general; that is, whether it is principled or conflicted matters little for most passages. So, it seems that Aristotle is outlining different presentations of vice in his ethics and these different kinds of vice are presented depending on which best illuminates the relevant topic.

One possible concern with my interpretation is that if Aristotle was supporting different types of the vicious person he would have clearly stated this. I believe this concern is avoidable if we consider that there are many aspects of moral badness that Aristotle does not unpack. His focus was seemingly on virtuous action as what we should strive for, so vice, brutishness and the like were not as central. If we go back to Thorp, and his examination of brutishness, specifically the differentiation of brutish vice and brutish akrasia, then it can be used as support for the idea that Aristotle also recognized different types of vicious people. If we focus on what Thorp suggests differentiates the four avoidable states, namely in regards to desires, Thorp argues that the strength of desire separates vice and incontinence, and brutish vice and brutish akrasia, furthermore what separates the brutish types is that the desires are unnatural (Thorp 683). But instead of considering these as separate, we can consider them as different types of brutishness, just as we can consider a CVP and a PVP as different types of vicious people. There is, of course, the difference that brutishness is even less clear than vice in terms of features that apply to it. But insofar as it can be broken into different types, we can apply the same argument to viciousness, so instead of three, which Thorp argues is technically four, states to avoid, there are technically six. If we consider only the broad categories, we can take Aristotle at his word when he stated there were three conditions to avoid (NE 1145b15), which allows us to maintain the symmetry between the conditions to avoid, and their counterparts. There is nothing to say that within the conditions to avoid, there cannot be different types or presentations of these conditions.

The strongest argument against this dual account of vice is that there is no outright textual support for it. However, there is also no textual evidence that dismisses it. By this I mean, just like there was nothing suggesting that vice is a progression, there is nothing to

confirm that a vicious person can be a CVP or a PVP. However, as mentioned above the only clear move to maintain that Aristotle was consistent, is to determine how a PVP and a CVP account can both be true of vice, and to see them as *different presentations* of viciousness seems to fit the best. Further, it has the benefit of being a more charitable interpretation than others, as it allows for the entirety of Aristotle's claims about vice and the vicious person to be accepted, rather than excluding or distorting some, which is necessary to try to argue for a CVP or a PVP interpretation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we have discussed how vice is presented in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* and examined common interpretations to make sense of Aristotle's claims regarding vice, as well as a few problems or concerns with each. We saw that we could not apply a CVP or a PVP interpretation to the entirety of vice. I have argued that this means the most charitable solution is to understand Aristotle's claims as pointing to different types of vicious people, and that when someone becomes vicious, they are either a CVP or a PVP.

## Chapter 2: Incomplete Friendships

### Introduction

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Aristotle holds that there are three kinds of friendships based on what is lovable about the friend. We can now discuss the first two types: utility and pleasure friendships. Aristotle clearly stated that vicious people can have utility and pleasure friendships (NE 1157a15). The question of relevance is not if vicious people can have these kinds of friendships, but if these types of friendships are friendships at all, or just something that resembles friendship. As we will see, this question largely rests on whether these friendships involve well-wishing for the other's own sake or just insofar as they bring benefit or pleasure.

This chapter will argue that utility and pleasure friendships as Aristotle conceives of them are genuine friendships, and not only called so due to their resemblance and similarities to complete friendship. My argument will heavily draw on John Cooper's stance on Aristotelian friendships, namely the importance and existence of well-wishing for the friends' own sake within all three types of friendships. I will primarily focus on the tensions between Nehamas's and Cooper's views, while positioning myself closely with Cooper's view. I will do this by outlining Cooper's argument that on Aristotle's view, incomplete friendships are not wholly self-interested, rather, they involve well-wishing for the friend's own sake. This means incomplete friendships involve both instrumental well-wishing and well-wishing for the friend's own sake. This view will be contrasted with Alexander Nehamas' stance that for Aristotle incomplete friendships are primarily instrumental.



This chapter will be structured as follows. First, we will examine incomplete friendships as Aristotle outlines them in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemean* ethics; this will allow us to understand their similarities insofar as they are both incomplete friendships, but also see the ways in which they differ. We will then look at Nehamas, who holds that utility and pleasure friendships are not friendships in the modern sense of the word, but rather called so due to their similarity to complete friendships. We will break down why his arguments fail to align with Aristotle's claims. We will then discuss whether utility and pleasure friendships are merely something resembling complete friendships, as Nehamas argues, or if they are actual Aristotelian friendships, as Cooper argues. In order to address this, we will unpack what Aristotle meant by well-wishing and how it fits in an incomplete friendship, that is, whether this well-wishing is solely instrumental or also includes well-wishing for the friend's own sake. We will then be positioned to examine Aristotle's view regarding vicious people and their friendships of utility and pleasure. Specifically, we will be considering what vicious incomplete friendships look like, according to Aristotle, and how these being genuine friendships fits with the vicious person's bad character. I will examine how the ability to have and maintain incomplete friendships differs between a conflicted vicious person (CVP) and a principled vicious person (PVP), drawing on the distinction between these two kinds of vicious people developed in the preceding chapter. I will argue that vicious people are capable of well-wishing for their friend's own sake, so they are capable of friendship, at least to this degree. If people in incomplete friendships are friends, and well-wishing for the friend themselves is a part of incomplete friendships, what does this mean for vicious people who are stated to be able to have friendships of this kind? More importantly, are vicious people able to have reciprocated goodwill towards others, or are they limited to only instrumental well-wishing? I will close the chapter by considering these questions.

### **Incomplete friendship in NE and EE**

Aristotle states of friendships between equals and friendships between unequal's, "Both relationships are forms of friendship, but only those whose relationship is based on equality are friends" (EE 1239a5). For this reason, we will primarily, for the time being, only be talking about equal friendships. First, we will briefly discuss the important aspects of complete friendships in order to be able to discuss how incomplete friendships are related. Complete friendships are stable (EE 1237b10) as both friends are virtuous, and virtuous character is long-lasting so friendships of this kind will persist (NE 1156b10). Such friendships are also rare (NE 1156b25), "immune to slander" (NE 1157a), and limited in number, as one cannot have many complete friendships (NE 1158a10). Complete friends are good without qualification, as good people are, and good for their friend by being both pleasant and useful, as good people are towards each other (NE 1156b15, NE 1157a).

Utility and pleasure friendships resemble complete friendships in that virtuous people find each other pleasant, just as pleasure friends do, and virtuous people are useful to one another, just as utility friends are (NE 1157a). They are friendships by resemblance or similarity to the primary friendship, complete friendship (NE 1157a30, EE 1236a15). Aristotle states, "On this view, the friendship of good people insofar as they are good is friendship primarily and fully, but the other friendships are friendships by similarity." (NE 1157a30). Utility and pleasure friendships are similar to complete friendships in a reduced way that makes them seem both like and unlike a genuine friendship. Incomplete friendships are incidental as these friends love each other because of their utility or pleasure and not the friend themselves (NE 1156a15). They are formed on the incidental features of the friend, and not the friend's character. Incomplete friendships are far more likely to dissolve, because

what is useful and pleasurable to someone is not stable like virtuous character is. If one of these friends is no longer useful or pleasant, then the source of loving is dissolved, and they will not love the other anymore (NE 1156a20-35). Regarding the dissolution of incomplete friendships, Aristotle states, “What is useful does not remain the same, but is different at different times.” (NE 1156a20), “as they grow up [what they find] pleasant changes too. Hence, they are quick to become friends, and quick to stop; for their friendship shifts with [what they find] pleasant, and the change in such pleasure is quick.” (NE 1156a35). So, both friends of utility and friends of pleasure will discover that what they find useful or pleasant changes over time, and on account of this, the friendship will dissolve.

We will now discuss utility and pleasure friendships and consider their differences and similarities. Aristotle states that friends of utility will seldom live together and, further, *might* not even find the other pleasant. Aristotle states that this is the type of friendship often found between older people, as they are not often pleasant. Further, what they find useful will change, so their friendship will not last past this change in usefulness (NE 1156a20-30). In contrast, he holds that friendships of pleasure are often found among the youth because “their lives are guided by their feelings, and they pursue above all what is pleasant for themselves and what is at hand.” (NE 1156a35). But what they find pleasant will not remain the same as they grow and change so these friendships will often dissolve due to this (EE 1236a35). So, both these types of friendships are likely to dissolve since what is pleasant and/or useful for someone will change, and this dissolution of friendship is common and expected, assuming mutual understanding of the friendship (NE 1165b5). As long as a friendship is not dissolved from excessive vice or a large shift in the state of virtue, Aristotle suggests that there should be an acknowledgement of the dissolved friendship between these ex-friends. That is to say,

it would be odd to treat them as a stranger when they had previously been a friend (NE 1165b35). Aristotle does state that for pleasure friends, their relationship may not necessarily dissolve if they have become accustomed to, and fond of each other's characters (NE 1157a10). Aristotle states that friendships of pleasure are superior to friendships of utility since they more closely resemble complete friendship as in both friendships, each friend gets the same things from one another and enjoys the same things (NE 1158a15), whereas utility friendships involve one friend receiving and the other providing some benefit. So, while pleasure and utility friendships share similarities, in that they are both incomplete friendships, they also have several significant differences. Incomplete friendships can also be found in everyone, including children, brutes and vicious people (EE 1238a30, NE 1157a), but in order for them to have a friendship of this type and not just fondness or goodwill, goodwill must be reciprocated. Aristotle states:

For it would presumably be ridiculous to wish good things to wine; the most you wish is its preservation so that you can have it. To a friend, however, it is said, you must wish goods for his own sake. If you wish good things in this way, but the same wish is not returned by the other, you would be said to have [only] goodwill for the other (NE 1155b30).

The important difference between having a friend and having goodwill for someone is that you must wish your friend well and, in return, be wished well by your friend. Goodwill for someone alone is not sufficient to have a friendship, it must be reciprocated and known. If it were enough that one-sided goodwill could be a friendship this would be an issue, as Aristotle states, because it would imply friendship can be had with objects, which is nonsensical. So, for it to be a friendship, you *must* wish good things to your friend, and have good things wished to you in return. Now, whether this well-wishing for another person for their own sake is meant to apply to all friendships or only complete friendship is unclear.

Notably, this discussion precedes Aristotle's description of the three types of friendship,

which would suggest this *does* apply to all three, although in different ways. The important thing here is that Aristotle specifies what is necessary to be in a friendship. For instance, an object cannot be a friend, as it cannot be aware of or return any goodwill. However, if someone has the capacity to be aware of and return goodwill, they can have an incomplete friendship. Incomplete friendships are also common since you can have multiple friends of pleasure and/or utility. Aristotle states, "If, however, the friendship is for utility or pleasure, it is possible for many people to please; for there are many people of the right sort, and the services take little time." (NE 1158a15). There is no reason why someone cannot have many friends of pleasure if we consider the examples that Aristotle provides of friendships of pleasure. Aristotle states, "some friends drink together, others play dice, while others do gymnastics and go hunting, or do philosophy." (NE 1172 a5). None of these are activities that are limited to two people. So, there is no reason why someone cannot and would not have multiple friendships of pleasure with their drinking buddies or fellow hunters. Also, if we consider a person who both drinks and hunts, and that these activities are done with different people, then it is reasonable, that they would have many pleasure friends, both within and across activities. Of incomplete friendships, Aristotle states:

The friendships we have mentioned involve equality, since both friends get the same and wish the same to each other, or exchange one thing for another—for instance, pleasure for benefit. But, as we have said, they are friendships to a lesser extent, and less enduring. They seem both to be and not to be friendships, because of their similarity and dissimilarity to the same thing. For, on the one hand, insofar as they are similar to the friendship of virtue, they are apparently friendships; for that type of friendship includes both utility and pleasure, and one of these types includes utility, the other pleasure. On the other hand, the friendship of virtue is enduring and immune to slander, whereas these change quickly, and differ from it in many other ways as well; to that extent they are apparently not friendships, because of their dissimilarity to that best type. (NE 1158b5-10)

As we have said incomplete friendships are lesser friendships, and will easily dissolve because their source is not long lasting or stable, whereas a friendship based on character is

more stable. This easy dissolution and incidental nature makes incomplete friendships seem as though they are not genuine friendships in the same way as a complete friendship is.

However, they share many qualities with complete friendships which makes them seem to be a lesser, less stable, albeit *genuine* friendship.

Aristotle claims that utility and pleasure friendships are incomplete, but are still friendships in some sense due to their similarity to complete friendships. Whether this means they are not friendships, and are only called so because they are similar or that their similarity to complete friendship is what qualifies them as a friendship can be debated. They are also less stable than complete friendships and will likely dissolve when the interests or needs of the friends change. These friends reciprocally wish their friend well, but whether this is merely instrumental well-wishing or well-wishing for the friend's own sake is also debatable, however, they must be aware that the other wishes them well.

## **Utility and Pleasure Friends as Genuine Friends**

### **Nehamas' Concerns**

As discussed in the introductory chapter, Nehamas considers the relationship between Aristotle's *philia* and modern friendship and argues that only complete friendship for Aristotle is proper friendship in the modern sense. Nehamas has many reasons why he holds Aristotelian incomplete friendships are not friendships in the modern sense. He states that incomplete friendships are primarily instrumental, there is no well-wishing for the friend themselves independent from the instrumental goals, and incomplete friends are interchangeable. For these reasons, he states that incomplete friendships are not friendship in the modern sense or even properly for Aristotle. Instead, they are only named so due to their similarity to complete friendship. Nehamas suggests that incomplete friendships cannot be a

friendship in the modern sense because friends of utility or pleasure are easily replaceable and do not wish their friend well for their own sake, but rather, any well-wishing is instrumental. I will unpack each of his main reasons and show why they fail to prove that incomplete friendships are primarily instrumental and why there is more affection between these friends than is suggested by Nehamas' account. We will start by discussing instrumentality and why it does not present an issue for incomplete friendships status as genuine friendships.

### **Instrumentality**

Nehamas states that for something to be considered friendship either in the modern sense or for Aristotle in the full sense, it needs to involve well-wishing and mutual affection. Nehamas points to a concern that, after seemingly stating that utility and pleasure friendships involve this, Aristotle then states that people wish well only in so far as they love the other. To wish someone well on account of their use or pleasurable qualities is not truly well-wishing for their own sake according to Aristotle. This means, any well-wishing is incidental and instrumental (Nehamas 219). Nehamas points to several quotes from Aristotle to support this. The first is this:

For the cause of every friendship is good or pleasure, either unqualified or for the lover; and every friendship accords with some similarity. And all the features we have mentioned are found in this friendship because of [the nature of] the friends themselves. (NE 1156b20-21).

He uses this passage to support his claim that incomplete friendships are friendships only due to their similarity to complete friendships (Nehamas 217). He then points to Aristotle's claim that incomplete friends wish each other well on account of use or pleasure, "But those who love each other wish goods to each other [only] insofar as they love each other." (NE 1156a9). Here Nehamas states this passage means they love their friend only to the *extent* that

they provide use or pleasure (Nehamas 219). So, incomplete friendships are relationships that resemble complete friendships and can only be called friendship due to this resemblance. (Nehamas 217).

However, I will argue that all of Aristotle's friendships have instrumental aspects. If we go back to the source of their friendship, utility, pleasure, and complete friends are all only friends due to their reason for loving their friend. While there is a difference between incidental features, utility and pleasure, and one's essential features, their good character, it still remains that if the friend is no longer useful, pleasant or of the same degree of character, then the friendship does not persist. The important difference of instrumentality between complete and incomplete friendships is that when you love someone for their virtue you love them for who they are, so it is not incidental, but that does not mean it is not, at least in part, instrumental. Complete friendships involve gaining some use and pleasure from their friend because the friend is virtuous and virtuous people will be useful and pleasant to each other (NE 1157a). So, for the same reasons that incomplete friendships resemble complete friendships, there are elements of their instrumentality within complete friendships, even though it is far less prevalent. Regarding incomplete friendships Aristotle states, "Many, however, remain friends if they have similar characters and come to be fond of each other's characters from being accustomed to them." (NE1157a10). This does not suggest that incomplete friendships are *solely* about getting use or pleasure out of the friend, but rather there is something more that ties them together, such as wishing them well and affection beyond their use or pleasure. Instrumentality alone is not enough to bar a relationship from counting as a friendship. Complete friendships have some instrumental aspects, whereas incomplete friendships are chiefly instrumental but they are not *solely* instrumental. A



friendship being instrumental does not bar it from being a friendship since Aristotle includes elements of instrumentality within complete friendships, so as long as incomplete friendships are not *fully* instrumental, then they can qualify as friendships according to Aristotle.

### **Well-Wishing**

We have talked about the instrumentality of incomplete friendships, and the question then arises: if the well-wishing is instrumental, does this mean the relationship cannot be a friendship? As I have argued, instrumentality is not a reason to bar a relationship from friendship status, as even complete friendships have instrumental aspects. I do think that if well-wishing were limited only to the use or pleasure of the ‘friend,’ Nehamas would be correct to argue that this is not friendship in the modern sense. However, the fact that well-wishing is incidental in these cases does not mean this. In fact, I shall argue, the situation is more nuanced than Nehamas presents. Liking someone or benefitting from someone does not amount to friendship *unless* the relationship also has the necessary qualities: reciprocal goodwill and an awareness of the other’s goodwill (NE 1155b30).

In his article “Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship”, John Cooper argues that both utility and pleasure friendships *do* involve well-wishing for the friends themselves and that Aristotle includes such well-wishing as an element of all three types of friendship. However, this well-wishing does rest on the source of the friendship. This means that for utility or pleasure friendships, if the friend remains useful or pleasant, the friendship will hold, and so too will the well-wishing. This means well-wishing in such cases is a mix of instrumental well-wishing and well-wishing for the friend’s own sake.

Cooper points towards a tension in how well-wishing is understood in the case of incomplete friendships. He notes that in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle states that:

Goodwill does not fall within utility friendship or pleasure friendship, since if one wishes for good things for someone because it is useful, one would wish that not on account of him but on account of oneself and people believe that, like friendship, goodwill is not for the sake of the person who feels the goodwill but for the sake of the person for whom he feels it. And if goodwill were a feature of pleasure friendship, then there would also be good will for inanimate objects. (EE 1241a5-10)

Whereas, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he states:

Perhaps we should add that friends are aware of the reciprocated goodwill..... [If they are to be friends], then, they must have goodwill towards each other, wish goods and be aware of it, from one of the causes mentioned above. (NE 1155b35-1156a5).

These causes are the sources of friendship (utility, pleasure, or good). So there seems to be a conflict in Aristotle's claims about goodwill's place in incomplete friendships. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle seems to suggest that goodwill is necessary and must be reciprocated for a relationship to be a friendship. However, in the *Eudemian ethics* he seems to state that goodwill is only found in complete friendships, because to have goodwill for incidental features would mean we can have goodwill towards objects. To deal with this apparent conflict Cooper points towards Aristotle's passage regarding wine and reciprocal well-wishing that we discussed above. He states that in this passage it seems as though Aristotle is arguing for a similar sort of well-wishing for all three types of friendship due to the passage preceding the introduction of the types of friendship. Cooper then brings up passages that seem to conflict with this and seem to suggest that well-wishing among incomplete friends is *solely* instrumental. These are the claims that pleasure friends and utility friends are loved only for their incidental features, use or pleasure. However, he states this would be too harsh a view to ascribe to Aristotle, as it would limit only the few virtuous people as being able to have actual friendships, and he believes there is a better, more charitable way to interpret these claims (Cooper 624-626). Cooper argues that when Aristotle

claims friends wish each other well insofar as they are friends (use, pleasure, good), he is suggesting that incomplete friendships limit the scope of well-wishing because use and pleasure are incidental. Hence, pleasure and utility friends are limited to wishing each other well as long as they do not lose their use or pleasure. Cooper argues that for Aristotle, when incomplete friends wish each other well, they do so on account of the friend's incidental features. For example, a friend of pleasure wishes their friend well for their own sake because they recognize them as having been pleasant and believe they should have good things happen for them on account of this (Cooper 635-636).

The largest difference then between incomplete and complete friendships on this interpretation is *not* that one is instrumental and the other is not, but rather that incomplete friends are friends due to incidental features, and so their friendships are more limited. For example, when a friend wishes their friend well, their well-wishing is limited to keeping them as a friend, so for utility or pleasure friends this is restricted somewhat by the basis of their friendship. In support of this idea, Cooper argues that Aristotle places a similar limitation on complete friendships, when he states they are wished well by their friend, but they are not wished to become godlike (Cooper 636-637). Becoming godlike would be good for that friend, but it would dissolve the friendship due to too extremely unequal levels of virtue. For any type of friendship, Aristotle seems to say well-wishing is limited as it will not persist if someone becomes no longer useful, pleasant, or their character changes. Cooper suggests that to understand goodwill this way is to draw a parallel between complete and incomplete friendships such that all three wish their friend well for themselves but are limited in the goods they wish for their friend by the source of their friendship (Cooper 638). Since the well-wishing in an incomplete friendship is far more limited than it is in a complete

friendship, it may seem like it is not well-wishing and may make it seem as though these friends do not love one another. But when we consider that incomplete friendships are lesser friendships, then it is clear that well-wishing and its limits are appropriate for incomplete friendships. For instance, utility friendships are the least similar to complete friendships (NE 1158a 20), you might wish your barber is in good health and happy, but you would not wish that they find a better job placement if it caused them to relocate, as their use to you would be no more, and the friendship would then dissolve. There are far more instances where you might not wish for something good for a pleasure or utility friend as there are many more ways for this friendship to dissolve, whereas complete friendships are more sustaining as character is not something easily changed. But the fact that there are more limits to these friends' well-wishing does not erase the fact that such limits are present within all three types of friendship.

There are passages in Aristotle that suggest that only complete friends have reciprocated goodwill. However, Cooper shows how these can be better understood to align with well-wishing for the friend's own sake across all friendships (Cooper 641-642). He points to passages that seemingly suggest that well-wishing for a friend's own sake is a characteristic of complete friendships only and shows how these passages can be interpreted so that well-wishing applies most of all to complete friendships, but not exclusively to them. However, he argues, it can still be a part of incomplete friendships. The first is,

Now those who wish goods to their friend for the friend's own sake are friends most of all; for they have this attitude because of the friend himself, not coincidentally. Hence these people's friendship lasts as long as they are good; and virtue is enduring (NE 1165b10).

Cooper argues that while this could imply that complete friendship alone involves well-wishing for their friend's own sake, with context, it seems more likely that Aristotle meant

that well-wishing in complete friendships is well-wishing on account of *and* for the friend themselves. He then argues that this way of understanding what Aristotle had in mind should be applied to the other passages that talk about well-wishing to gain a better understanding of what Aristotle meant (Cooper 641). We will now turn to Nehamas' concern that incomplete friends are interchangeable.

### **Interchangeability**

Nehamas states that for Aristotle incomplete friends are easily replaceable and interchangeable since the instrumentality of these relationships is primary. He provides an example of a utility friendship; Tomas is a barber, and they are friends of utility on account of this, so Nehamas wishes Tomas well insofar as he does well as his barber. This is incidental to Tomas himself because his role as a barber is not a feature of his character, and the dissolution of their utility friendships would not change Tomas' character, thus it is incidental to him (Nehamas 112-113). Nehamas attempts to highlight the instrumentality of incomplete friendships and how this creates a problem when calling it a friendship in the modern sense. He sets up affection and instrumentality as contradictory. Nehamas states, "when a friendship's instrumental aspects come to the fore, even the closest of friends becomes replaceable." (Nehamas 112-113). He then uses the example of having a friend who is a surgeon and deciding to use a specialist who is available instead because they are better suited in an attempt to show that while these friendships may not be completely instrumental, the instrumentality is primary and so incomplete friends are interchangeable to suit the need or pleasure at hand (Nehamas 112-113).

I will argue that there are two issues here. The first is that this is an example that is likely not applicable to most friendships of utility, as they do not usually involve life and

death choices. If we use the same logic with Tomas, the same result likely will not happen. For example, unless Tomas was incompetent, in which case it is unlikely he would be of use anyway, so the friendship would not last, it is not likely someone, especially someone who considers him a friend, even of utility, would replace him so quickly and easily. Consider the fact that it is likely Tomas has been a friend for some time and clearly does a fine job as a barber for this friendship to persist; if this is the case, then there would be no need to try and find a better barber, especially if Tomas is valued as friends are. Now, if Tomas' competency determined if you lived or died, like is the case with Nehamas' surgeon example, then having the best possible barber would become relevant, but this is not reflective of the friendship itself or even how useful the friend is; it has become an issue of necessity.

The second issue with Nehamas's claim is that Aristotle does not state that using someone besides a utility friend for a certain use devalues or dissolves the friendship. You can have multiple friends with the same use (NE 1158a15). Also, using someone to fulfil a use a single time, even if you have a friend of utility who normally meets that need, does not impact the friendship of utility. For example, let's consider an example of a utility friendship with your pet sitter. If they are on vacation and unavailable when you need them, using a different pet sitter out of necessity does not mean you and the replacement pet sitter are utility friends, nor does it mean you cannot use your original pet sitter again once they return. In the case of the specialist, it is not necessary that they become a friend of utility, but rather, the friend has gone to someone else to ensure they live; this alone is not enough to have any determination on the friendship or the value of the friend. Possibly, if the specialist will be needed more than once, then a relationship and possibly even a friendship will form, but you can have more than one utility friend, so this is still a non-issue. However, even if the

specialist does replace the surgeon, there is a difference between always looking for the best X, and happening across a better X and switching to it. If the usefulness of a friend changes, then the friendship can dissolve without any devaluation of the previous friendship. However, Aristotle does not seem to suggest that one is always looking for the best when one is in a utility friendship, or that friends are interchangeable, but rather that people become friends because of use or pleasure, and these things can and will change. Further, it seems as though utility and pleasure friendships cannot always involve trying to find the best person to meet X need when, as we will discuss later, it isn't always necessary for a friend of utility or pleasure to be aware of the source of their friendship. But even if they are aware, it won't mean they aim to find someone better.

Stepping aside from the specifics of the example, the point Nehamas seems to be making here is that utility friendships, when the friends are aware of the instrumental aspect, will suffer from the receiving friend being on watch for whoever will best serve their needs and any affection for the friend will not matter since they are not the best X. Nehamas argues that a relationship that is incidental and instrumental is not a friendship in the modern sense (Nehamas 112). By contrast, on my interpretation, while it remains that you are friends because of utility, you also love your friend. So, while you might not wish for your friend to relocate if this impacts their ability to be your barber, it is also the case that even if they do move and it is less convenient the relationship could still persist. So, a barber who you may have started going to because they are in a convenient location may become a friend of utility and you would then wish them well for their own sake, such that if they get a more beneficial placement or job but it is inconvenient to you, you would still wish them well and potentially still even use them as your barber if possible. However, if Tomas was interchangeable as any

of the above cases might hold him to be, then this is not a friendship in any sense. It remains the case that friendship involves affection for the other, and to replace them so easily if they still had everything that made them a friend would be to disregard this affection. The point of importance here is that friendships of utility involve affection for the friend themselves and would not dissolve as quickly or easily as Nehamas seems to suggest. While they would dissolve if Tomas stops cutting hair altogether or moves somewhere that makes him completely inaccessible, this does not mean a minor inconvenience would cause a dissolution or that incomplete friends of the same use are interchangeable. Aristotle states that incomplete friendships easily dissolve when the reason for the love for the other person changes (NE 115620), so if Tomas stopped being a barber or moved too far away, this would lead to dissolution, but if he still cuts hair, there is no reason to assume the friendship would necessarily dissolve.

### **Awareness of well-wishing**

Stepping away from Nehamas somewhat, let's consider if one has to be aware of instrumentality to have an incomplete friendship. For Aristotle, friendships involve recognized, reciprocal goodwill. In the case of incomplete friendships, I have argued this goodwill is both instrumental and for the friend's own sake. So, for it to be reciprocated, must the friends be aware of the instrumentality or only of the goodwill in a general sense? It seems as though you can have a pleasure friendship without being aware of the origin of said friendship. For example, drinking buddies often will only realize they were friends due to shared activity if they stop drinking because both sides will not be gaining pleasure from the relationship, and it will dissolve. So, in cases like this, it doesn't seem necessary that they both know they are only friends due to the shared activity. It seems that at least pleasure



friendships don't require knowledge that the friendship is built on pleasure in order for it to be a friendship. It is also possible for friends to have mistaken views about their friendship without devaluing the previous friendship. Aristotle states:

We might, however, accuse a friend if he really liked us for utility or pleasure, and pretended to like us for our character. For, as we said at the beginning, friends are most at odds when they are not friends in the way they think they are. (NE 1165b5-10).

This claim is not that the misunderstanding means they were never friends, rather, it suggests what is important about the maintenance of a friendship is our perception of the other. For now, we will set this thought of perception aside and return to it in the next chapter.

Aristotle says little to nothing about how friendships are formed; this is important because if the friendship is not made for the sake of utility or pleasure, then the friend might not reflect on the source of loving the other. If they are not aware, this would not seem to cause any issues generally, or conflict with anything Aristotle has claimed. Seemingly, it is not relevant for the determination of the relationship as an incomplete friendship if the friends are aware of the benefit their friend gains. Aristotle only states that they must be aware of the other's goodwill; as far as expectations and formation of friendship is concerned, he is vague. Awareness of a friendship's instrumentality does not mean it is immediately disposable. Nehamas seems to imply (or only highlights cases where) the instrumentality in these relationships is calculated and cold in the sense that the person seeking or befriending does so solely with the goal of getting the most utility or pleasure out of their friend. But as we have discussed above, it does not seem that it is Aristotle's view that friendship originate with the end goal finding the best X. So, it is likely that most utility friendships would involve awareness of instrumentality, but not with the goal to find the best possible X.

## Utility and Pleasure Friendships of Vicious People

I have argued that Aristotelian incomplete friendships include reciprocated goodwill, which involves well-wishing for the other's own sake, and hence can be called friendship in the modern sense. We can now discuss how vicious people can have friendships of utility and pleasure. Can vicious people have goodwill for their friends? My answer is yes. Assuming the friendship perseveres and that well-wishing for the friend does not conflict with their own interests, then there is no reason why vicious people cannot wish well for someone, in that they are their friend, and they want their friend to do well. Utility and pleasure friendships involve well-wishing and affection beyond just the instrumentality, and vicious people are capable of this. Aristotle has said vicious people can have utility and pleasure friendships, just as children and beasts can, so it would be remiss of Cooper to suggest well-wishing is a characteristic of utility and pleasure friendships and ignore this. So, by leaning on Cooper's interpretation of Aristotle's friendships we will examine how this can fit together. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle states:

For base people can even be pleasant for each other, not insofar as they are base or morally neutral, but like two musicians, or if one is a music lover and the other is a musician; and insofar as all people have some good, so too they suit each other in this respect. Again, they could be useful and beneficial to each other, not without qualification but relative to what they have decided on, not insofar as they are base or morally neutral (EE 1238a35-1238b10).

Vicious people can have friends and friendships that originate from pleasure or use just as non-vicious people can; this suggests that there is no difference in structure between the utility friendships of base people and the utility friendships of people with better characters. If we return to the barber example but imagine that Tomas is vicious, seemingly, we can use the same example with no change. Now, since we have determined that there are two differing ways to be vicious, we will consider first a case where Tomas is a principled vicious

person (PVP), and then if he were a conflicted vicious person (CVP) to see how incomplete friendships will differ with different types of vicious people.

If Tomas is a PVP, then he would be unrepentant, believe that pleasure is good and should be striven for, and be principled. If he is a CVP, then he would strive for pleasure but know it is not good, regret acting on his desires, and be at odds with himself. Considering both of these features make little difference in regards to a utility friendship since this type of friendship involves a pact of sorts, meaning they both know what they want, to get a haircut or receive money for services rendered. Now, there could be the concern that perhaps Tomas would try to get more money than he deserves. Indeed, as Aristotle states, vicious people aim for more than they deserve (NE 1167b10). However, if we take into account what Aristotle claims about friendship, which is that it is something people want (EE 1237b20) then the solution seems to be that a vicious person may want a friend *more* than they want more money. A PVP would have no problem setting aside their desire for extra money to have a greater benefit, their friend. A CVP would likely struggle here, as they are not principled, but likely an agreement about the cost of cutting hair is already set. Furthermore, having accusations and discord about benefits is fairly common in utility friendships (NE 1162b5-35), so even if this were a problem, and even if it dissolved the friendship, it would not be cause to discount it as a friendship.

Perhaps it is easier for vicious people to be friends of utility than friends of pleasure, since utility friends often have clear expectations of exchange. If we consider a friendship of pleasure, there are some differences between a CVP and a PVP, but both are able to have this type of friendship. However, generally it will be more difficult for a CVP to maintain a friendship of pleasure than it will be for a PVP. Seemingly, there will be no difference

between the ability of a PVP and an average person's ability to have incomplete friendships. On the other hand, a CVP will struggle more as they are at odds with themselves, so what they want and what they do conflict, they also have no friendly feelings towards themselves (NE 1166b5), both of which can impact for pleasure friendships. What a CVP finds pleasant will be greatly limited due to the fact that most things they do, they regret. Aristotle states, "still he is soon distressed because he was pleased, and wishes these things had not become pleasant to him; for base people are full of regret." (NE 1166b25). While a CVP might enjoy eating an entire feast in the moment, he will regret doing so afterwards, whereas a PVP, as stated in Chapter 1, will enjoy devouring the feast and think they were right to do so. This means that what is pleasant will differ somewhat for a PVP and a CVP, as a CVP knows they act wrongly and regret it (NE 1166a10-1167a25), but a PVP believes they are right (NE 1151a5). This means a CVP will not find vice or vicious actions pleasant in any premeditated way, whereas a PVP will. It follows a PVP could take pleasure in eating gluttonously with a friend or stealing together *as well as* having a pleasure friendship based on a common interest, such as music. However, a CVP would likely not be able to maintain a pleasure friendship based on anything vicious, as they do not find stealing or gluttony to be good, but instead fail to refrain from such actions. So, a CVP cannot have a pleasure friendship based on anything vicious, which will be prevalent in most activities they do. If we consider their options for friends this illustrates another issue, that they will struggle to find someone to have and maintain a pleasure friendship with. Their options for a friend are to: have a pleasure friendship with another vicious person, or someone who isn't vicious. If they try to have a pleasure friendship with a vicious person, either a PVP or another CVP, both will act viciously, which a CVP will not enjoy. That is to say, a CVP might find acting viciously to be pleasant but that is momentary and not something they would recognize as pleasant outside of

committing the act itself. So, they would not plan to devour a whole feast with their vicious friend and find that pleasant, it is more likely, the case that they would attend a feast and fail to stop themselves from overindulging. If they tried for a pleasure friendship with someone who isn't vicious, they would not find the other unpleasant, but it is very likely their own vice would make them unpleasant to the other, so they would not be an appealing friend.

However, they may have an interest in music and this could be a persisting interest that they could share with a friend. This quote from Aristotle would apply well to a pleasure friendship with a CVP:

Again, in these ways those who are not excellent could also be friends to each other. One might be pleasant to another not insofar as he is base but insofar as he shares a common interest, for example, if he were a culture lover, or again insofar as there is something decent in everyone (that is why some of them might even enjoy associating with an excellent man); or insofar as they adapt to each person. For all people possess something of the good (EE 1238b10).

So, a CVP could enjoy sharing an activity with someone else and build a friendship of pleasure on that, regardless of their own character. But there still could be issues due to their vice, since their bad character would impact most activities. For example, if they were drinking buddies, they would likely overindulge, or if they enjoy games they might cheat; both of which could undermine their friendship. Of course, there are interests such as music, where being vicious would not have much impact on their ability to enjoy or play music. It seems that it is possible for a CVP to have pleasure friends based on non-vicious activities, but it will be difficult for them to maintain these friendships due to their unstable character, whereas a PVP will be able to have pleasure and utility friendships seemingly as easily as a non-vicious person.

Now, a vicious person, whether a PVP or a CVP, clearly has a bad character, and this might raise the concern of whether they have the capacity to have goodwill for others. Here is

where instrumentality is particularly important. Let's consider a friendship of pleasure, drinking is a fine example. Let's say these drinking friends are both vicious; yet they enjoy their shared activity and wish their friends well because they are friends. This well-wishing is not solely so they can drink with them, but rather, as we discussed above, they will wish their drinking buddy well for their own sake because they recognize them as someone pleasant and think good things ought to happen to them on account of this. There is nothing about wishing that good things happen for someone, so long as it doesn't affect their own interests or the source of the friendship, in this case, their ability to drink with the vicious person, that would be problematic for a vicious person. That is to say, there is no clear reason why a vicious person could not wish that good things happen to someone else in a limited capacity. So, rather than the friendship being on account of pleasure alone, it is partly on account of the friendship and for the friend just as it is for any other incomplete friendship. Now, we have discussed that well-wishing is limited, even among complete friends, and it is also the case here, although to a stronger degree due to their vice. The only difference between the structure of a vicious person's incomplete friendships and incomplete friendships of non-vicious people is that the vicious person's well-wishing might have narrower standards, since the well-wishing cannot extend to things that would undermine the very conditions of the existence of the friendship. Perhaps we might think a vicious person cannot genuinely wish someone well for their own sake, but just because they might not be able to wish their friend well to the same degree as a non-vicious person can does not mean they are incapable. If we hold that a vicious person cannot wish goods beyond what they themselves have, then that is still not an issue if we consider the limits to incomplete friendships. If we consider this for pleasure friendships, then wishing well to that degree would be unpleasant and this would cause the friendship's source, pleasure, to be impacted. So, there is nothing problematic about

the vicious person who cannot wish their friend well over themselves. This is not to say that this can be too strong a limit in their well-wishing for the other's sake because they must wish their friends well for their own sake for this to be a friendship, but this well-wishing can be more limited than the non-vicious persons would be. Well-wishing having a limit does not mean that a friendship is not a friendship. The fact that vicious people will have these limits does not seem to contradict anything Aristotle has stated about friends or well-wishing, even if we consider it as Cooper has suggested. Aristotle states that bad people can have incomplete friendships (NE 1157a15) and that even base people are not completely horrible and might have fine interests that could be the source of an incomplete friendship with someone of a better character or even the same character with shared interests or needs. It is likely the case that there are vicious people unable to wish someone else well to any degree outside of their instrumentality, but it is not an issue to say they do not have a friendship. It is the case that there is a significant difference in how a PVP and a CVP are able to have incomplete friendships. A PVP is able to have functional incomplete friendships, although less stable than those of a non-vicious person, whereas a CVP will be able to have utility friendships but will struggle to have friendships of pleasure.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have examined incomplete friendships as they are outlined in the ethics and have asked whether, and to what degree vicious people can have them. We have considered how instrumentality applies to these friendships, and whether Aristotelian incomplete friendships actually ought to qualify as friendships or if they are simply similar enough to complete friendship, and so-called friendship. We concluded that incomplete friendships are friendships due to their similarity to complete friendships, but, that this does

not mean they are not friendships. We have then considered what well-wishing means within the scope of incomplete friendships. On this topic, we adopted Cooper's view that while incomplete friendships do involve instrumentality, for Aristotle, they *also* involve wishing well for the other's sake. We briefly examined if utility and pleasure friends must be aware of the instrumentality of their relationship and concluded that they do not necessarily need to be. Finally, we considered how vicious people can wish others well and what friendship of this sort might look like. We determined that incomplete friendships between a CVP and a PVP will differ in some ways. A PVP will have different ideas of pleasure than a CVP, but both seem to be able to maintain incomplete friendships and to wish others well for their own sake. Importantly, both a CVP and a PVP can have incomplete friendships. Hence, vicious people can be friends in these ways, according to Aristotle.



## Chapter 3: Vicious Character Friends

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that on Aristotle's view, vicious people can have incomplete friendships. This chapter will examine whether vicious people can have Aristotelian character-based friendships, or if they are limited to incomplete friendships as has been commonly accepted. In this chapter, I will argue that it is an implication of Aristotle's view that principled vicious people (PVP) are able to have character friendships, whereas conflicted vicious people (CVP) likely cannot. In order to argue this, I will first briefly examine what Aristotle says about complete friendships in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*. I will then turn to John Cooper's distinction between character friendships and complete friendships and examine how we can understand Aristotelian friendships that are based on a person's character if they are not virtuous. Cooper argues that Aristotle presents degrees of character-based friendships that allow even non-virtuous people to have character friendships. I will use Cooper's interpretation of character friendship in order to determine whether vicious people should be included with the other non-virtuous people who can love each other on account of good character, or if their vicious nature disqualifies them from this type of friendship. Since we are considering vicious people, we might think that they could not have character-based friendships in the same way as virtuous and non-vicious people will. In fact, we might question if vicious people have anything good about them on which to base a character friendship. Nevertheless, I will argue, vicious people, at least of the principled kind, can have Aristotelian character-based friendships.

I will consider three different possibilities in which vicious people might be able to have character-based friendships: (1) they have *some* genuinely good character traits and are friends on account of these good qualities, just as non-vicious character friends are, (2) they act as though they have good qualities and are friends on account of seemingly good traits that they do not in fact possess, or (3) their vicious qualities are the source of their friendship. After narrowing down which of the above options best suits a vicious character friendship, I will address some concerns with the idea that Aristotle thought there can be vicious friends. I will examine five passages from Aristotle that would seem to disqualify vicious people from having character-based friendships. There are several places where Aristotle appears to suggest that vicious people are incapable of character-based friendship. For example, he writes, “one base person will treat another unjustly and those who are treated unjustly are not friends with each other.” (EE 1236b15), “Vicious people, by contrast, have no firmness, since they do not even remain similar to what they were.” (NE 1159b), and “Base people, however, cannot be in concord, except to a slight degree, just as they can be friends only to a slight degree; for they seek to overreach in benefits [to themselves]” (NE 1167b10). I will argue that these passages fail to show that *no* vicious person can have character friends on Aristotle’s view. I conclude this chapter by considering and addressing three other concerns that arise from attributing to Aristotle the view that a vicious person can have a character friendship.

Before I begin, a clarification is in order. When I reference good character traits, I do not mean full blooded virtues<sup>8</sup> since on Aristotle’s view only the virtuous possess any virtues.

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<sup>8</sup> When I discuss virtues, I will explicitly refer to them as virtues, all references to character traits (unless otherwise stated) will be to non-virtuous traits.

For Aristotle, if someone possesses one virtue then they possess them all, that is to say, Aristotle holds that virtues cannot be possessed independently from the rest. Aristotle states:

That is why it is also hard work to be excellent. For in each case it is hard work to find the intermediate; for instance, not everyone, but only one who knows, finds the midpoint in a circle. So also getting angry, or giving and spending money, is easy and everyone can do it; but doing it to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, for the right end, and in the right way is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it (NE 1109b30-35).

Practical wisdom allows for a person to act correctly and exercise their virtues, so in order to be virtuous someone will have the practical wisdom to know how to act and act that way for the right reasons (NE 1144a10). It is not that the virtues are a unity in the sense that they are a single thing, but rather they are inter-entailing because while they are separate things, they cannot be possessed separately. So, any discussion of good traits among non-virtuous people cannot be referring to virtues. When I reference honesty as a good trait, this is not honesty insofar as it is a full-blooded virtue, but more so honesty insofar as non-virtuous people can possess it. This means it will often be flawed, but it is still a good trait as the person in question is not boastful (excessive) or self-deprecating (deficient), but *close* to the intermediate (full-blooded honesty). This distinction between good and virtuous traits is important because it allows us to seriously consider if vicious people have any good traits and if they do, if they befriend others on account of these traits.

### **Complete and Character Friendships**

In the previous chapter, I discussed complete friendships, where I stated that according to Aristotle complete friendships are between virtuous people and limited in number, as one cannot have many complete friends (NE 1156b10, NE 1158a10). These friendships are also stable and long-lasting because a virtuous character is stable (EE

1237B10), and 'immune to slander' (NE 1157a, NE 1156b25). Complete friendship is the ideal or best of the three kinds of friendship, as it is friendship most of all and the other kinds of friendship are only friendships due to their similarity to it (NE 1157a30). When discussing character-based friendships, Aristotle often refers to virtue and this type of friendship as being between virtuous people, but there are instances where he does not do this. These instances open up the discussion of whether this type of friendship *must* be between virtuous people, or if it is simply based on good characteristics, wherein the *ideal* version is between virtuous people. As we will discuss, John Cooper holds that Aristotelian character-based friendships can include non-virtuous people and that Aristotle simply focuses on the best version of this type of friendship, which is complete friendships<sup>9</sup>. While Aristotle reserves complete friendship for the virtuous (NE 1156b10-15), I will agree with Cooper, who argues there is room to consider character-based friendships between non-virtuous people under Aristotle's theory of friendship. But I go further than Cooper to that argue this should be taken further to include vicious character friendships.

We can now discuss character friendships, which John Cooper argues Aristotle presents throughout the ethics as a lesser kind of complete friendship that is available to the non-virtuous. Cooper argues that the best interpretation of the three types of friendship for Aristotle, is to see them as based on pleasure, advantage, and recognition of a person's moral goodness, rather than being based on pleasure, advantage, and perfect virtue, which is how Aristotle's theory of friendship has commonly been understood. For instance, befriending a

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<sup>9</sup> This distinction between character and complete friendships is one I have included for the sake of simplicity; wherein complete friendships refer to character-based friendships between virtuous people and character friendships are character-based friendships between non-virtuous people.

non-virtuous person based on their honesty, or some other good characteristic could not be considered utility or pleasure friendship because it is presumably not loving them because their honesty is useful or pleasant, but rather it is their honesty itself which is found praiseworthy and good. Cooper also raises the question: when does Aristotle recognize a friendship as one based on moral goodness? Cooper notes it is typically in reference to virtuous people. However, if we take this to mean that only virtuous people can have friends, it is concerning because it limits the average person and allows for only the virtuous to have anything more than utility or pleasure friendships. Cooper argues that complete friendship, as we have discussed it in the previous chapters, is simply the perfect kind of character friendship, which is between virtuous people. He further argues that there are degrees of this kind of friendship just as there are with incomplete friendships. There is a variation in the degree of a pleasure friendship and how complete it is, so it would be sensible to assume that all the types of friendship have this variation (Cooper 627). For example, just as someone might enjoy drinking with their friend of pleasure, yet not doing other activities with them, Cooper suggests that someone might recognize and value their friend's generosity even if they also are obtuse. While a complete friendship is based on the perfect virtue of a friend, a lesser-character friendship can be based on a few good, or *seemingly* good, moral characteristics. Cooper suggests that someone can be pleasant or useful for only one thing and they are known as pleasant and useful in this respect, not fully, so it is logical the same can be true of character friendships. While some might involve love of the whole person's good character, it could also be that someone comes to love them on account of a few of their morally good qualities, and not the entirety of their character. This would still be a character friendship as it is on account of their good qualities that the friendship is formed. Cooper holds that Aristotle did not limit character-based friendships to the virtuous few (Cooper

627). Cooper supports his interpretation by pointing out that during Aristotle's discussion of unequal friends, he acknowledges virtue friendships between superior and lesser character friends, which suggests perfect virtue is not necessary to have a friendship based on character. This means both friends can be less than fully virtuous *and* still be friends on account of their character (Cooper 628). Cooper suggests that Aristotle's focus on the most perfect friendship has led people to conflate character and complete friendship and conclude that only the virtuous can have friends based on character, which is not actually the case (Cooper 629).

Cooper's interpretation can be further supported by appealing to the following quote from Aristotle, "As we have said, virtue and the excellent person would seem to be the standard in each case." (NE 1166a10). It seems that Aristotle is acknowledging that he references and focuses on the virtuous person as the *ideal*, not the only case. This also makes sense if we consider the intended audience, those who are striving to be virtuous and studying ethics. It is sensible that his focus is to illustrate the best and most choiceworthy case. Further support for Cooper's interpretation can be found if we consider some of the examples of friendship Aristotle provides that do not immediately or clearly fit into one of his categories of friendship. For example, in his article "Friendship and Virtue: A Fruitful Tension in Aristotle's Account of *Philia*", John Tutuska talks about a tension between Aristotle's three kinds of friendship and the several cases he presents that do not seem to fall under any of the three kinds of friendship. When examining the outlying cases Aristotle presents, Tutuska discusses the case of wicked friendships:

Wicked people might seem to present another difficult case. Although Aristotle initially denies that wicked individuals can be friends other than for use, he writes that they can "become friends for a short time, enjoying each other's vice [*chairontes te allelo n mochthe riai*]," and contrasts this with friendships of use

and pleasure. This is an admission that vicious individuals can enjoy each other as being vicious rather than as being useful or pleasant. It might seem strange to deem this a relation other than of pleasure, but Aristotle seems to mean that wicked individuals can enjoy each other *di' hautous*, on account of what they are and in a twisted way go beyond friendship of pleasure (Tutuska 359).

Tutuska concludes from this that Aristotle provides examples that do not fall under any of the three types of friendships, that is, there are examples of friendship that Aristotle provides that are based on the person, not their use, pleasure or virtue. Tutuska concludes that Aristotle has two types of love around character: loving the other for what they are, independent of virtue, or loving them for their virtue. The latter is the typical complete friendship that Aristotle outlines, but the former can be extrapolated from the odd cases Aristotle presents that do not seem to fit easily in one of the three kinds of friendship, that is the friendships “based on similarity, familiarity, and belonging” (Tutuska 360).

I will reject Tutuska’s conclusion<sup>10</sup> but hold that the above examples support Cooper’s interpretation of character friendship. That is, not all friendships based on a person’s character need to be between perfectly virtuous people:

Friends do not need to be overflowing with excellences in order for them to have genuine love for each other’s character or self, as shown by ordinary experience in the cases of mothers, brothers, comrades, ex-lovers, and wicked people (Tutuska 361).

As Tutuska suggests, Aristotle provides cases where it seems that a friendship can be formed not based on utility or pleasure, but something else, which we can conclude is aspects of their person that are the source of their love for one another. A more fitting conclusion than the one Tutuska presents is that Aristotle simply focuses on the best case, complete friendship and the other cases are character friendships. The cases of similarity, familiarity, and

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<sup>10</sup> Tutuska concludes that this is a tension between loving on account of virtue and virtue being irrelevant to how we love character and he states this reflects the experience of loving the friend himself (Tutuska 363)

belonging, *do* fit into a judgement of the good, and is, in fact, a part of one of the three kinds of friendship Aristotle outlines, they just are not examples of complete friendships. As Cooper states, character friends can love their friend for a part of who they are, without necessarily needing to love the whole. We can then narrow the examples of similarity, familiarity and belonging to simply be examples of character friendships. Tutuska recognizes there are cases presented by Aristotle that are not examples of utility or pleasure friendships and do not involve perfectly virtuous people, or at the least are not formed due to perfectly virtuous character. So, while Tutuska is not drawing the same conclusion as Cooper and I, this aspect of Tutuska's interpretation fits well as a support for Cooper's interpretation of character friendships.

Aristotle's three kinds of friendships are based on what is loved (useful, pleasant, good) and this is what the friend has *conceived* of the other as having, which suggests there is room to be mistaken about these causes. Aristotle does not focus on the possibility of mistakes about the other's character, since complete friendship is his focus. But Aristotle does suggest that one can be mistaken about friendships of utility and pleasure. Aristotle claims, "We might, however, accuse a friend if he really liked us for utility or pleasure, and pretended to like us for our character" (NE 1165b5-10). For instance, if someone believed that they were friends on account of honesty, but instead discovered that they were only loved because they were pleasant to drink with, the fact that they were not friends in the way they thought does not mean they are not friends. It only means that they were mistaken about the source of the friendship. This revelation may dissolve the friendship, but the friendship did exist. Further, this suggests that one does not need to be aware of the source of a friendship, meaning a friendship can include ignorance. So, if we consider that one's love for the other



person is based on a person's perception of the other, then it opens the possibility for a friendship based on good character to be based on ignorance. The possibility of ignorance-based friendships provides reason for us to consider vicious character friendships; as it is not the *actual* good which must be known and found choiceworthy, but only the *apparent* good. Now that we have distinguished between complete and character friendships, we can consider if vicious people can love someone on account of their character, or if they are limited to incomplete friendships of utility or pleasure.

### **Vicious character friendship**

In her paper “Aristotle on Love and Friendship”, Corinne Gartner makes a relevant statement regarding well-wishing between non-virtuous agents:

A non-virtuous agent can wish apparent goods to her friend out of loving regard, even if, lacking the correct conception of value, she is unable to wish genuine goods to the friend for his own sake strictly speaking.....If even non-virtuous – though not thoroughly bad – agents regard their friends in this way to some extent, then virtuous agents, too, will regard their friends in this way to an even higher degree, for virtuous agents more fully exemplify all of the characteristic features of loving. There is a necessary connection between being virtuous and responding to a friend with loving concern for the friend's own sake; there is no necessary connection, however, between lacking virtue and lacking other-regarding concern for the friend. There are, Aristotle explains, many ways to be in error, but only one way to be correct. (Gartner 153-154)

While Gartner excludes vicious people, if we consider the previous chapter, where we determined that vicious people can have incomplete friendships and that these friendships do include wishing well for their friend's own sake, we can suggest that vicious agents can fit within the category of non-virtuous people mentioned by Gartner, since they do not lack the ability to have other-regarding concern. While vicious people do not necessarily lack other-regarding concern, they will not exemplify it as well as a virtuous, or even non-vicious, person will. The main aspect of import we can draw from Gartner's claim is that while

virtuous people are the best and will be the best friends, with the best friendships, this does not discount other, less virtuous agents from friendship. Theirs will simply be a worse version of friendship, the difference between a complete and character friendship if you will.

When discussing virtuous people, Aristotle states, “In fact, each one loves not what is good for him, but what *appears* good for him; but this will not matter, since [what appears good for him] will be what appears lovable.” (NE 1115b25, my emphasis). This claim is important when we consider vicious people, specifically PVPs, because for them actual and apparent goods will differ, allowing us to consider how apparent goods and friendship might relate in regards to vicious friendships. If vicious people can be friends on account of their character, then there seem to be three possible options for the basis on which a vicious person can have character-based friendships:

(1) For the first possibility, the vicious person is valued on account of a few genuinely good traits they possess, and this is the basis of the character friendship. For this possibility, we will consider if vicious people can have good traits, and if they can, whether that is enough to form an Aristotelian friendship. This possibility raises the concern that vicious people, by being vicious, have limited good aspects. However, if they can have character friendships on account of their few good traits, then any vicious character friendships would be of the same kind as character friendships between non-vicious people.

(2) For the second possibility, the vicious person is loved on account of the *appearance* of good traits that they *pretend* to possess. This option involves vicious people who act as though they are good and are then befriended on account of the seemingly good traits that they do not possess but act as though they have. This possibility would rest on a

friendship being formed on traits that are not a part of someone's character. This raises a concern over non-existent traits being the basis of a character-based friendship.

(3) For the third possibility, the vicious person is loved on account of their genuinely vicious character, and the bad traits that they actually possess. For this possibility, it is necessary that a character-based friendship, sometimes referred to as friendship of the good, can be based on genuinely bad traits. In order to deal with this concern, I will consider the difference between apparent and actual good, and which of these is actually the basis of any friendship of character.

### **(1) Friends on Account of Genuinely Good Traits**

The first option is that a character friendship between vicious people is more or less the same as one between averagely good people, in the sense that both are based on *actual* good traits. So, the vicious person is befriended on account of a genuinely good trait or two that they possess. This option rests on the vicious person having some good character traits; meaning they are not all bad through and through. As we discussed in Chapter 2, a vicious person might have morally neutral hobbies, but their character is still bad. While vicious people may be able to have pleasure friendships *despite* their character, it seems difficult to state they can be friends on account of their character, even if it is only on account of one or two good aspects of it, when the rest or majority of them is so thoroughly bad. Now, there may be room to consider that a CVP, or a PVP has a good trait or two, these traits would be connected and expressed alongside their bad traits. For instance, a vicious person may be punctual, but uses their punctuality to be a more successful thief. So, while being punctual might be good, what they would use this good trait for is not. However, there are some reasons that could support this option, such as Aristotle's claim that everyone has something

decent in them (EE 1238b10). Perhaps there is a vicious person who is patient or witty, and someone befriends them on account of this good trait. While it seems plausible that a vicious person, more likely a PVP, could be patient or have limited good traits, I hold that this is not enough for a proper character friendship.

Cooper states a character friendship need not account for the entirety of someone's character, it could be based on a few traits or a singular trait (Cooper 627). But Cooper does not acknowledge the possibility of vicious character friends, so character friendship as he considers it recognizes genuinely good character traits that an average person might have. It seems plausible, and I will argue it is the case, that a character friendship cannot exist and persevere based on a single good character trait when the rest of the character is thoroughly bad. A vicious person may surely have one good character trait - perhaps they are witty, punctual or something to that effect. But if they had a number of good character traits, they would no longer count as 'vicious' for Aristotle. This means there must be a limit to the number of good characteristics they can have. Also, for someone valuing good traits, we can assume there would be far too large a difference between the amount of good to bad traits a vicious person has for any character friendship to exist by these standards alone. For instance, Cooper states, "one might be attached to someone because of his generous and open spirit, while recognizing that he is in some ways obtuse, or not very industrious, or somewhat self indulgent." (Cooper 627). While this suggests a character friendship between non-vicious people could be based on a single trait and allow for them to have bad traits, we can assume their bad traits do not significantly outweigh their good traits, as a vicious person's would. Unlike Cooper's example of the everyday average person who has both good and bad traits, a vicious person's bad traits would be greatly disproportionate to any possible good ones. This

means to have a character friendship between a non-vicious and vicious person, the non-vicious person would have to love the vicious person on account of a single good trait, or two, and *in spite of* the rest of their character, which seems very unlikely. While we can recognize the possibility of good traits in a vicious person, no friendship for any vicious person, regardless of whether they are a CVP or a PVP, can be made based on their very limited good and substantial bad traits. This is not to say they cannot act *as though* they have numerous good traits. Perhaps the *appearance* of good characteristics is enough to sustain a character friendship, as we will now consider.

## **(2) Friends on Account of the Appearance of Good Traits**

The second option is that a vicious character friendship is based on good characteristics that the vicious people involved do not possess but act as though they have. It is easy to imagine that a vicious person can act in accordance with some good traits without possessing them and that the other party finds this choiceworthy. For instance, someone finds the appearance of truthfulness or friendliness to be good and sees a vicious person who acts as though they have these traits as choiceworthy.

Unlike the previous option, there will be significant differences in this second case depending on whether we are considering a CVP or a PVP, so we will start by considering a CVP, before moving on to considering a PVP. Regardless of the friend's knowledge of the vicious person's character, it is difficult to imagine that a CVP could be friends in this way. Firstly, this would not make for a friendship between two CVPs, because if they realized and appreciated the actual good, they would be aware of their own and their friend's badness and be too unstable for a friendship. For this possibility, a CVP faces the same concerns that we discussed in the previous chapter regarding a CVP having pleasure friendships, namely that

while they might be able to recognize they are wrong, they fail to act otherwise. So, it appears that any CVP would fail to maintain good character traits or maintain any friendship based off of them. Even if they can briefly do this, the relationship will quickly dissolve, likely before it can fully become a friendship.

On the other hand, it is easy to consider a PVP who *acts* as though they have good traits, and perhaps they have one or two, as we mentioned above. But primarily these characteristics are not reflective of their actual character. They recognize that acting as though they are honest or good-natured will be beneficial and so they do. Even if they act as if they were good, they are still vicious because they do not correctly recognize the good, that is, they believe what is pleasant is good, so they think their bad traits are correct. Unlike the previous option, there is no concern that acting according to these good traits would disqualify them as vicious, as there was if they actually had these traits. For them to actually have these traits, and be genuinely good, they need to have the correct beliefs and act on them in the right ways at the right times (NE 1105a30). A friendship based upon traits that are not actually possessed, but only expressed, by the person seems more feasible with a PVP. This is because PVP are able to deliberate and aim for what they want, as there is no discord between their appetite and wish, as there is with a CVP. However, there is an issue here, namely a PVP believes that they have the correct conception of the good, meaning that while they might pretend to have good traits to benefit themselves, they would not view these as good traits, but only recognize that others, the majority, approve of them. A character friendship is based on the (apparent) good and if a PVP befriends someone for their actual good traits, it would not be because they approve and value their character, rather, it would likely be for utility or pleasure's sake. The only character they might approve of would be one similar to

their own, since it would match their mistaken conception of good. This suggests the only way for a PVP to befriend someone for their character, and not utility or pleasure, is on account of bad character traits - a possibility I consider in the next section. This means two PVPs cannot be friends on account of good traits, real or merely apparent.

I have argued that no friendship based on good traits that are not actually possessed could work between two vicious people of either type. However, as stated above, there does remain the possibility that a PVP and a non-vicious person could have a character friendship wherein the PVP befriends the non-vicious person on account of several bad traits they have, and the non-vicious person befriends and values the appearance of good traits that the PVP presents themselves as having. In order for this option to be viable, we need to consider if a character friendship can be based on merely apparent traits that a person does not actually have, or if it needs to be based on someone's true character. Well-wishing for someone's own sake is necessary for Aristotelian friendship and it is on account of *and* for the friend themselves, suggesting that for someone to wish another well in a character friendship, they must know their friend's character and wish them well on account of that. So, the friend cannot wish their friend well and be factually ignorant of their friend's actual character. This means for any character-based friendship, both friends must know the other person's character. If the non-vicious friend was aware of their vicious friend's actual character, they would wish their friend well on account of their love for their expression of good traits that they do not actually possess, *and* knowing who they are, they wish them well insofar as they recognize and value their pretence. This is further support for why two PVP's could not be friends on account of good traits that the other pretends to have, because they would only be

valuing the deception. To have an Aristotelian character friendship, is an awareness of their friend's character enough, or must the friendship be based on the friend's actual character?

There is the concern that a characteristic on the basis of which the vicious person is loved in this kind of case is less essential than someone's love of drinking, which is to say it is completely inessential, which makes the resulting relationship seem more similar to an incomplete friendship than a complete one. We can determine that this would not be considered an incomplete friendship because wishing them well because they *act* friendly is not wishing them well because they are pleasant or useful but rather because you have judged friendliness as good, so it is love on account of good. However, since this friendliness is not an actual trait the PVP friend possesses, it is not relevant to their actual character, which is a problem if we want to say this is a character friendship. Perhaps the non-vicious friend is valuing the pretence and not the trait the PVP friend expresses themselves as having, even though they do not, *but* then it would be valuing a bad trait, deception of others, or valuing their ability to act, which is a hobby and so not character based. It seems that a character friendship needs to originate from an actual character trait, or it is actually an incomplete friendship. However, if it does originate on account of a genuine trait of a vicious person, it must be based on their bad traits since, being vicious, their bad traits will outnumber their good traits. Otherwise, it is merely a relationship that resembles a friendship.

As we have said, it is possible that vicious people can have a good trait or two, so perhaps there might be an instance of loving a vicious person for the single good trait they possess, knowing they are thoroughly bad, but overlooking it since they act good. However, I think a more likely and common case of friendship between two vicious people would be a



friendship based on their actual bad traits. Therefore, it is to this possibility, option three, that I now turn.

### **(3) Friends on Account of Bad Traits**

The third and final option for a friendship of character between vicious people is one between two PVPs that arises from an acknowledgment and approval of their actual vicious nature. Whether or not the vicious person pretends to have some good qualities, the other party finds their vicious traits loveable and bases the friendship on their viciousness. That is, they enjoy each other's character based on their similarities of character, because a PVP finds vice and vicious acts choiceworthy. This friendship is based on normative ignorance, since it rests on having a mistaken belief about the good, and there will be a significant difference between the actual and apparent good. Only those who think viciousness is correct, and hold vice as good, and as such are normatively ignorant, could be friends in this way.

I will argue that it is an implication of Aristotle's view that a friendship based on normative ignorance can be a character friendship for the following reasons: the people involved are friends on account of aspects of the other's character that *appear* good to them, they are both unlikely to change their character, and if they want to keep the other as a friend and they wish the other well, then they are friends for the other's actual character. Of virtuous people, Aristotle states, "In fact, each one loves not what is good for him, but what *appears* good for him; but this will not matter, since [what appears good for him] will be what appears lovable." (NE1155b25, my emphasis). This is an important claim because it allows us to surmise which of the three options would best suit a vicious character friendship. If we consider what we discussed in Chapter 2, regarding what is pleasant for a PVP, which is vice, it seems clear that any friendship based on character for a vicious person must be based on

their bad character traits, since that is what they hold to be good. This means any friendship between two PVPs will be because they recognize the other's true character and are friends on account of that. Aristotle states that people aim for what appears good to them, meaning character friendships are based on the good, but the good insofar as it appears. While usually apparent and actual goods overlap or are similar, for vicious people, PVP at least, this is not the case. If we consider that character friendships originate due to the love of good traits (including apparently good traits), then it seems that PVP could only be friends on account of bad traits, since they mistakenly believe these are good traits. If they were to befriend someone due to actual good traits, then they would not be befriending them on account of the other's good character, as they see it, but rather some other reason, such as that having a friend with good traits is beneficial.

A friendship based on bad traits between two PVPs will be an instance of shared normative ignorance, without any factual ignorance about each other's character, so while this is a friendship based on ignorance, it is not deceptive. This is important because while a friendship based on ignorance or mistakes can be a friendship, one with deception about the source of the friendship will not. Aristotle does speak of friendships involving ignorance when discussing the dissolution of friendships, where he writes:

Friends are most at odds when they are not friends in the way they think they are. Also so, if we mistakenly suppose we are loved for our character, when our friend is doing nothing to suggest this, we must hold ourselves responsible. But if we are deceived by his pretense, we are justified in accusing him (NE 1165b5)

Having a mistaken understanding about the basis of the friendship does not mean it was not a friendship, but this mistake is blameworthy, either on ourselves or our friends, depending on the cause of the error. This is not suggesting that this deception or ignorance devalues the previous friendship, but rather that the friends will be at odds if it is discovered that there was

a different perception of their friendship. Further, to intentionally deceive someone seems to show a lack of care and goodwill and undermines the reciprocity of friendship. Hence, while a relationship that involves intentional deception about its source may resemble a friendship, it would not seem to be one in the Aristotelian or in the modern sense of the word. The mistakes Aristotle describes are those involving factual ignorance, which is to be mistaken about matters of fact, such as believing your friend is honest when they are not. A friendship based on factual ignorance is not a strong friendship because it is unstable and will dissolve the moment the person realizes their error. The necessary aspects of friendship are that, “friends are aware of the reciprocated goodwill..... [If they are to be friends], then, they must have goodwill towards each other, wish goods and be aware of it, from one of the causes mentioned above.” (NE 1155b 35-1156a5), in this case, the cause is the apparent good. There is an important difference between normative ignorance and factual ignorance. A friendship based on bad traits is one of normative ignorance. A friendship based on normative ignorance avoids the issues associated with friendships based on factual ignorance. This is because it is easier to overcome factual ignorance than it is to realize you are normatively ignorant. For instance, if you believe someone is honest when they are not, it is easier to realize your mistake than it would be to realize lying is wrong if you mistakenly hold it to be good. On the other hand, believing that vice is good and choiceworthy is a serious error but also not one easily solved, in order for one to overcome this ignorance one would need to stop being vicious, but vice is not a state easily left (NE 1151a5). So, while normative ignorance is a problem for the individual, it does not seem to be one for the ability to have and maintain a friendship.

The question remains whether a relationship based on bad traits would be a character friendship or merely something resembling a friendship. In order for it to count as an Aristotelian friendship, it must involve reciprocated well-wishing between two people on account of their apparent good character, and be known by both parties (NE 1155b 35-1156a5). We briefly discussed that vicious people can wish their friend well for their friend's own sake, where we argued that so long as wishing their friend well does not infringe on their own well-being, it should not be an issue if the friendship is valued<sup>11</sup>. We will discuss vicious people's capacity to wish their friends well for their own sake in a character friendship in more depth later on. For now, there seems to be nothing stopping these conditions from being met. Vicious character friendships count as character-based friendship because they meet the conditions for an Aristotelian friendship and are based on a conception of the good.

The possibility of character friendships of this kind between PVPs, who love each other for the bad traits they really possess, believing these traits to be good, also fits with Cooper's view. While supporting the possibility of non-virtuous character friends, Cooper states:

Such a friendship would belong to the type, *virtue-friendship*, because it would be based on the conception of the other person as morally good (in some respect, in some degree), even though the person does not have, and is not thought to have, a perfectly virtuous character (Cooper 627)

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<sup>11</sup> Presumably if someone, especially a vicious person, were to have and maintain a friendship such that they cared for and wished their friend well for their own sake then they also value the friendship as well as believing their friend deserves good things due to being seen as good- especially if we consider this with Aristotle's claim of wanting a friendship, we can draw the conclusion that something wanted and thought good is also valued.

So, a friendship based on bad character between two PVPs fits Cooper's conception of character friends and as such counts as an Aristotelian friendship of character.

In this section, I have argued that two PVPs could form a character friendship based on love of each other's genuinely bad character traits, which they mistakenly hold to be good. However, there remain many concerns that could disqualify vicious people from having character friendships. First, there are passages where Aristotle seems to state that vicious people cannot have these types of friendships. Second, there are other concerns that arise when we consider that vicious people can have character friendships. First, we will address passages in Aristotle where he seems to say vicious people cannot be character friends and show why these passages do not actually disqualify *all* vicious people from being able to have and maintain character friendships. Next, we will move on to consider the other concerns.

### **Concerning Passages**

For our purposes, we will be dealing with statements in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics* that deny vicious people can have complete friendships<sup>12</sup>. We will look at five passages from the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* that appear to conflict with the possibility of vicious character friends. They are as follows: (1) one should not love what is bad (NE 1165b10-15), (2) vicious people have unstable characters (NE 1159b), (3) vicious people overreach in benefits (NE 1167b), (4) vicious people must make a pact to have any kind of friendship (EE 1239B15), and (5) vicious people will act viciously towards others (EE 1236b15).

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<sup>12</sup> These will be the claims that are specifically about a vicious character, not the general passages that would also apply to all non-virtuous people

(1) The first is the concern Aristotle expresses about loving what is bad. Aristotle states:

But if we are deceived by his pretence, we are justified in accusing him-even more justified than in accusing debasers of the currency, to the extent that his evildoing debases something more precious. But if we accept a friend as a good person, and then he becomes vicious, and seems so, should we still love him? Surely we cannot, if not everything, but only the good, is lovable. The bad is not lovable, and must not be loved; for we ought neither to love the bad nor to become similar to a base person, and we have said that similar is friend to similar. (NE 1165b10-15)

This passage suggests that someone cannot love what they perceive to be bad, and one should not love what is actually bad, as it implies they are bad themselves. This does present some issues for the possibility of vicious character friendships, since a CVP does have a somewhat accurate understanding of what is bad, in that they regret their own vicious actions (NE 1166a10-1167a25). On the other hand, a PVP does not have a disconnect between their wish and actions, so to love a bad person for them does not involve perceiving their vicious friend as bad. There is still the concern that they *should* not love what is bad, and befriending another vicious person may further cement their vicious nature. However, this does not affect their ability to have a friend, but only whether they benefit or are harmed as a result of their friendship.

In “The Nicomachean Account of Philia”, Jennifer Whiting points out that the *Nicomachean Ethics* clearly distinguishes between what is actually good and what appears as good, to emphasize that the apparent and actual good should be the same, and will be for a virtuous person. She states that Aristotle suggests that someone can pursue the actual good by aiming for the apparent good, “even if (thanks to defective appearances) they are mistaken about what is really good” (Whiting 280). She further states that it is Aristotle’s view that people both should and do aim for what is actually good by way of aiming for what they hold

to be good for themselves and hoping this is actually good. (Whiting 280). While vicious people fail significantly and their conception of good is damaged due to their vice (NE 1151a15), Whiting's passage is still important because it emphasizes that vicious people will have a disconnect between apparent and actual goods, such that their friendships will be shaped by their understanding of good, just as their actions are. Because everyone believes they are right, or rather that they have the correct conception of the good, as Aristotle states:

That is why each of the extreme people tries to push the intermediate person to the other extreme, so that the coward, for instance, calls the brave person rash, and the rash person calls him a coward, and similarly in other cases (NE 1108b 20-25).

So, while a CVP knows they are wrong in their actions, they still hold that they are correct in knowing the good, they just have a disconnect between their wish and actions. A PVP, on the other hand, acts according to their principles, thinking they are correct to do so. Both types of vicious people avoid the above concern, since they are both already vicious and act badly.

(2) The second passage concerns the stability of a vicious person's character. Aristotle claims that vicious people "are unfirm because they do not remain similar to what they were" (NE 1159b). This concern can be avoided if we are only considering them once they have become vicious; a character friendship with someone who becomes vicious will dissolve, but one started with a vicious person could persist. Vicious people are normatively ignorant and normative ignorance is something that cannot be easily overcome, so as long as they are vicious they will be ignorant of the good. This means that a PVP's character will remain relatively unchanged, and so once they are vicious they will remain the same. We might still be concerned because a CVP "is not one person but many, and over the course of the same day he is different and capricious." (EE1240b15), meaning a CVP is unfirm and unstable so this issue could be applied to them even after they become vicious. A possible solution is that

while they are unstable, they are predictably so, meaning any friend would be able to recognize that they will always go for the pleasant thing at hand. However, even if this is not a satisfactory solution, it remains that this passage applies only to a CVP, who we have already determined cannot have character friendships. So, this does not mean that *all* vicious people are barred from character friendship due to being infirm.

(3) The third and fourth passages will be treated similarly. The third concern is that Aristotle states that the base need a pact to be friends:

For the good is simple and the bad is variable. And the good man is always similar and his character does not change, while the base man and the senseless man change radically between morning and night. This is why base men, *unless* they make a pact with each other, are not friends, but quarrel. And a friendship which is not stable is no friendship. (EE 1239B15, my emphasis)

Firstly, this again seems to only refer to CVP, so it would not apply to all vicious people.

Secondly, and more importantly, this passage states friendship is uncommon but not impossible for vicious people, assuming they make a pact. If they are suspicious of others as Aristotle claims (EE 1237b25), then it would be reasonable for them to make a pact or agreement of sorts that rests on their valuation of the friendship. This claim more than anything emphasizes the rarity and difficulty that vicious people will have forming and maintaining friendships due to being vicious, but it is not claiming it is impossibility for them to be friends.

(4) The fourth passage is concerned with vicious people's tendency to think they deserve more than they do:

Base people, however, cannot be in concord, except to a slight degree, just as they can be friends only to a slight degree; for they seek to overreach in benefits [to themselves], and shirk labors and public services. (NE 1167b)



Aristotle claims that vicious people cannot be friends because they always overreach and avoid working. Unlike the previous passage, this seems to apply to vicious people in general, but there is a clear solution which we touched on in Chapter 2. Vicious people will only behave this way if there is nothing more to gain from doing otherwise, but if they can get something more by not overreaching or avoiding work, then it is a nonissue. They can come to an accord with a friend and put in the effort to hold onto a friend because the friendship is better than what they would gain from overreaching and avoiding work. Although a CVP might struggle and fail at times to form and maintain a friendship, a PVP should have no issue doing this if they value their friendship. Now we might be concerned with the fact that they can only ever be in concord to a slight degree, but I will suggest that this aligns with how they can be friends, which is also to a slight degree if we consider it in comparison to non-vicious friendships. That is, any vicious friendship or relation will also be vicious (NE 1172a10) which means it is inferior to those of non-vicious people, but it is still a friendship.

(5) The fifth, and final, passage we will consider is Aristotle's claim that vicious people can be friends of utility and pleasure but not in the complete sense because they treat each other unjustly:

And base people could be friendly to each other on account of usefulness and on account of pleasure, but because they do not have the primary form of friendship people say that they are not friends, since one base person will treat another unjustly and those who are treated unjustly are not friends with each other. But they are in fact friends with each other, just not in the primary sense of friendship, since nothing stops them from being friends in the other two senses. (EE 1236b15)

This passage raises the question of whether vicious people could treat each other justly or at least not unjustly enough to remain friends. If they treat each other justly, then they can be friends if we consider the difference between apparent and actual good. As we have stated any character friendship between vicious people rests on them believing the other to be good

and wanting good things for them insofar as they mistakenly recognize the other as good. So, it does not seem impossible that they would genuinely treat the other justly. Of course, many vicious people may not be willing to act justly, so this raises the question of whether a friendship could exist if the friends treat each other poorly, which we might think they would if they are vicious and act viciously. For example, let's say friend A is prone to thievery, friend B might appreciate their skill, but would not care for it, or the friend, if they themselves were stolen from. However, if we assume friend A is able to actively not steal from friend B or do anything horrible to them because they value their friendship, and only steal from others, then there is no reason why they cannot be friends on account of their vice. Even if someone values vicious traits and characteristics, it is unlikely they would enjoy them directed towards themselves. But, at least for a PVP, it is possible they want a friendship, as everyone does (EE 1237b20). If so, then the solution to this is the same as the concern about a vicious person taking advantage of others, which is that they want this friendship and adjust their behaviour accordingly, as in the example above. Further, average people can be character friends and it is likely they may treat their friend unjustly on occasion, since they act for what appears good and they are not virtuous, meaning they will at times be mistaken. They still will not be friends in the primary sense as the passage claims, but as it seems this refers to complete friendship, neither will other non-virtuous people in character friendships.

All in all, most of these passages seem to reference a CVP. For instance, Aristotle's remarks regarding vicious people not finding themselves unpleasant, unstable regarding their attitude, etc. all apply to CVPs. From this and using the twofold account of vice outlined in Chapter 1, we can conclude that it is consistent with Aristotle's remarks that a PVP *can* have a character-based friendship, whereas a CVP *cannot* for the reasons Aristotle presents.

## **Other Possible Concerns**

More concerns arise if we accept that vicious people can have character-based friendships. They are as follows: (1) vicious people cannot have a very stable friendship, (2) vicious people will struggle to wish someone well in the ways necessary for a character friendship, and most importantly (3) if we hold that vicious people, even just a few of them, can have all three kinds of friendships, is this state as miserable as Aristotle claims that it is? That is to say, does allowing for vicious character friendships undermine Aristotle's essential claim about vice being a miserable state?

(1) The first concern is that any vicious friendship will be less stable and enduring than one between non-vicious people. To this, I respond that this will tend to be the case, but friendships can dissolve without the friendship's prior status being revoked. An unstable friendship is still a friendship while it persists. It is also possible that the friendship will not dissolve much faster than a slightly bad, average person's character friendship would. Further, if we consider the relation between moral status and friendship, then it does not seem odd that a virtuous person's friendship will be strong and persist, whereas an average person's will be less strong, and a vicious person's will be the weakest. This can be paralleled to the three types of friendship, in the sense that, just as complete friendships are superior to friendships of pleasure and utility, friendships of any kind between virtuous people will be stronger and superior to those of average and vicious people. This is also why a character friendship must be on account of an actual trait, because a character trait that is not possessed by someone is not something that is stable because it is not real. So, while a vicious person might pretend to have good qualities, this is not relevant to their character. It seems that any character friendship that is not based on a person's actual character is not a character

friendship, or if it is, it will not be very stable. This means that as long as we are considering a friendship between two PVPs based on their actual bad traits, it can be a relatively stable character friendship.

(2) The second concern is whether a vicious person has the ability to wish their friend well for their friend's own sake. My answer is yes, as discussed in Chapter 2. But is there a difference between wishing another person well on account of utility and pleasure, which we have argued vicious people can, and doing so on account of character? There is, as we discussed, so the question becomes: can a vicious person wish another person well to the necessary degree for it to be a character friendship? Cooper argues that the main difference between friendships based on incidental and essential traits is related to permanence; good character is more permanent than incidental qualities, so well-wishing based on the good is stronger and more stable (Cooper 626). I argue tentatively that, like a virtuous person's character, a PVP's character is also not likely to change, so their bad character and qualities are also unlikely to change. A PVP has a conception of the good and acts according to that (NE 1151a5). They also believe they are correct in pursuing pleasure and that others who disagree, such as those with the correct conception of the good, are mistaken (NE 1108b20-25). This means that their character will be stable, in a similar way to that of any other principled person. That is to say, they will act towards their conception of the good and since vice is an unchanging state (NE 1151a5), their character will likewise be unchanging. So long as they act according to normative ignorance, they will not change significantly. This means there is a permanence associated with vice as a general state, for both a CVP and a PVP, but also, due to their principled nature, for a PVP's character. This is not the same as being

mistaken about the source of the friendship, both friends know and love the other, they just do so with a mistaken conception of the good.

Assuming a PVP is wished well for their actual character, this well-wishing should be similar to well-wishing in a non-vicious character friendship, in that it is well-wishing on account of their *apparently* good traits. Further, if, as we previously determined, all friendships require mutual care for the person's own sake and vicious people can have incomplete friendships, then they are capable of caring for others for their own sake to a degree (EE1238a35). In the previous section, we determined that it seems possible for vicious people to have friendships based on their bad qualities, but also that they could, in specific circumstances, have a character friendship based on good traits they pretend to have in conjunction with the actual qualities they possess. In either of these cases, we are concerned with the capacity of a PVP to genuinely wish their friend well for their own sake, but as we discussed above, they believe they are good and they befriend their friend because they believe they are good. So, they are wishing their friend well because they mistakenly take them to be good and want good things to happen to them on account of this.

While the well-wishing in a character friendship is far less instrumental than it is in an incomplete friendship, it can still have limits. Just as the virtuous person does not wish for his friend to become godlike (NE 1159 b5-10), a vicious person would not wish their friend well such that it would dissolve their friendship. Cooper did not specify that only some non-virtuous people were capable of character friendships, but rather left friendship open to non-virtuous people in general. Since non-virtuous people generally can have character friendships, and there are degrees of non-virtuous people, some very nearly vicious, it would seem that wishing well within a character friendship is something *slightly* bad people can do.

There may be a significant difference between a slightly bad person and a fully vicious one, but it remains that both are similar. In fact, it may be the case that a PVP will be more successful in having a character friendship, as they are ignorant of their own badness. As we discussed in Chapter 2, a vicious person's ability to wish another well will have far more limits than a non-vicious person's and some might fail to wish another well sufficiently for a friendship. But it remains that there are some PVPs who could wish their friend well and have a character friendship, albeit one inferior to and weaker than a non-vicious person's.

(3) The third concern with stating that vicious people can have friendships of all three kinds, including character friendships, does this imply that vice is not as miserable a state as Aristotle claimed? If so, this would undermine many of Aristotle's claims about vice and viciousness. While many of the concerns around vicious character friends can be solved by appealing to a CVP and the distinction between vicious states, the fact that vice is a miserable state is something that *must* apply to any kind of vice. This raises the concern that allowing friendships of this kind to vicious people does not show that vice is a miserable state, and in fact makes it seem less bad, especially if this is a genuine friendship. If vice is not clearly a miserable state, then it might be appealing to non-vicious people. The main concern would be with the everyday, average person who has roughly equal good and bad aspects, and that they would question why they should strive to be good if being bad is not an awful experience, but the same could be asked of why they should not act viciously in general. For instance, a gluttonous PVP might devour a feast and enjoy doing so because they hold acting for pleasure to be good. We could then consider an average person with gluttonous tendencies, and why they would not devour a feast. It might be that vicious people have pleasant experiences and overall think they are correct and good but they are mistaken and any non-

vicious person would not strive to be like that. That is, vicious people have a large conflict between apparent and actual good because their ruling principle is corrupted (NE 1150b15), whereas non-vicious people are capable of recognizing that what vicious people strive for is wrong.

Further, just because some vicious people are able to have friends does not mean they will actually be happy. Having friends may be *necessary* for happiness (NE 1170b15), but it is not *sufficient* for it. So having the capacity for friendship of all three kinds does not mean the vicious person will not be in a miserable state. The capacity to have friends does not mean that they will successfully have any. In fact, it seems that it will be difficult for them to have friends, as it involves treating their friend well, and so not treating them viciously. Moreover, of all the friends and friendships, those between vicious people will be the worst, in fact, these friendships are *vicious*, as Aristotle states:

Hence the friendship of base people turns out to be *vicious*. For they are unstable, and share base pursuits; and by becoming similar to each other, they grow vicious. But the friendship of decent people is decent, and increases the more often they meet. And they seem to become still better from their activities and their mutual correction. For each molds the other in what they approve of, so that '[you will learn] what is noble from noble people. (NE 1172a10, my emphasis)

So, it seems from this we can conclude that only those who find vice appealing would find vicious friendships appealing. This means a PVP's capacity for friendship does not prevent vice from being a miserable state. In fact, the fact that character friendships between vicious people are harmful to those involved might make the state even more unappealing, as these friendships will cement both friends' vicious nature and make both worse. Suggesting that it is implied by Aristotle's view that vicious people can have character friendships does raise several concerns, but these concerns can all be dismissed. While not all vicious people are capable of having friendships, not *all* vicious people are limited from this kind of friendship.

In fact, it seems the vicious people that Aristotle referenced when discussing vicious people who cannot have friends were CVPs. Whereas the limitations added to friendship due to a vicious person's character seem to refer to PVPs *and* are only limitations, *not* an incapability.

## Conclusion

I have argued that Cooper has the correct interpretation of Aristotle's character-based friendships, in that Aristotle did not limit this type of friendship to virtuous people. I considered three different possibly ways in which a vicious person could have a character friendship: (1) on account of good traits they possess, (2) on account of good traits they do not possess but present themselves as having, and (3) on account of their genuinely bad character. I determined that no vicious person has enough good traits to rest a friendship upon and that a character friendship must be formed on account of a person's real character traits. So, any character friendship must be based on genuine characteristics that a vicious person possesses. While it remains possible that someone could befriend a vicious person based on a single genuinely good trait in conjunction with several good traits they present themselves as having but in actuality do not possess, this would seem to be a rare case. The most probable case in which a vicious person could form a character friendship is on account of bad character traits. However, this means that only a PVP is able to have Aristotelian character friendships, as a CVP does not hold their bad traits as good, whereas a PVP does. This is because it is necessary for character friends to love each other on account of the apparent good. While a CVP might be able to be loved for their bad character, they could not love others for theirs. Since a PVP's bad character traits are good to them, and character-based friendships are based on the apparent good, they can have a character friendship based on the apparent good traits of others while having a mistaken conception of the good. I considered



several concerns, both from direct passages in Aristotle as well as other concerns that appeared to disqualify vicious people from character friendships. But these concerns at most only disqualify a CVP or add limitations to vicious friendships. So, of the two types of vicious people, only a PVP can befriend someone on account of their bad traits. Meanwhile, it seems that a CVP would only be able to befriend someone on account of good traits, but they are too unstable to successfully have character friendships in this way. I have argued it is an implication of Aristotle's view that not all vicious people are able to have character friendships, but some can, so they are not *all* disqualified due to their vicious nature.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that *some* vicious people can have Aristotelian character-based friendships. I began in Chapter 1 by considering what interpretation of the vicious person best aligns with Aristotle's claims. In doing so, I discussed three common interpretations: (1) Aristotle's account of the vicious person is inconsistent, (2) Aristotle's account of the vicious person is consistent, and the seemingly inconsistent statements can be understood under a PVP *or* a CVP interpretation, and (3) the vicious person goes through different stages of viciousness which are contradictory. I argued that none of these interpretations successfully bring together Aristotle's claims about the vicious person. A more charitable interpretation is that Aristotle was outlining two different kinds of vicious person, that is, that he held that viciousness can express itself differently. My solution is to attribute two distinct accounts of vice to Aristotle, based on the idea that he recognized two distinct kinds of vicious person. Wherein a vicious person either becomes a principled vicious person (PVP), *or* a conflicted vicious person (CVP). This account allows us to make sense of Aristotle's seemingly conflicting statements regarding vice, as a PVP and a CVP are in many ways very different.

In Chapter 2, I argued that Aristotle's conception of *philia* can be considered friendship in the modern sense as it involves many elements often associated with modern friendships. One of these elements is well-wishing for the other's own sake, which I argue is a part of all three kinds of Aristotelian friendships. I considered incomplete friendships and whether they involve well-wishing for the friend's own sake, or if the well-wishing is primarily instrumental. I argued that all of Aristotle's friendships involve well-wishing for

the friend's own sake, and incomplete friendships simply have more factors which limit well-wishing than complete friendships do. I argued that the existence of well-wishing for the friend's own sake within all three types of Aristotelian friendship (utility, pleasure, and complete) gives reason to call them all friendships in the modern sense. Aristotle clearly states that vicious people can have incomplete friendships of utility and pleasure, so I considered how a vicious person could wish someone well for their own sake, and determined that they are capable of this, but they would do so in a more limited sense than a non-vicious person. I argued that a PVP would be able to have incomplete friendships as easily as any non-vicious person, whereas a CVP would struggle to have a pleasure friendship because they are conflicted, and at odds with themselves.

After determining that vicious people have the capacity to wish someone well for their own sake, in Chapter 3, I considered if they would also be able to have character-based friendships. Importantly, I noted that Aristotelian character-based friendships are based on apparent good, *not* actual good. While the apparent and actual good will be the same for a virtuous person, for any non-virtuous person there can, and will, be differences between them. Since vicious people are normatively ignorant, this difference between the apparent good and actual good is even greater. As John Cooper argues, there is a lesser type of complete friendship, character friendship, which is available to non-virtuous people who can befriend others on account of a few good traits they possess, even with the presence of bad traits. Using Cooper's conception of character friendships, I considered whether vicious people also could have this kind of friendship, or if this conflicts with Aristotle's account of character-based friendships. That is, I asked whether vicious people can have character friendships, and if this is an implication of Aristotle's view. I answered yes, and based upon

what I have argued, that there is more than one type of vicious person, both these types of vicious person have the capacity to wish another well for their own sake, and many of the possible objections to vicious character friendships apply solely to CVPs. This means that a PVP *could* befriend someone on account of their character. In terms of what sort of character, or character traits a vicious character-based friendship would be based on, I considered three options: (1) it is based on good traits possessed by the vicious person, (2) it is based on the appearance of good traits the vicious person pretends to have, and (3) it is based on the bad character of the vicious person. I determined that the first option would not make for a friendship between vicious people because they have too few good traits and too many bad. Option 2 also would not make for a vicious character friendship, as character friendships cannot be made based on traits that are non-existent. This leaves option three. I have argued that some vicious people could be character friends in this way. However, only a PVP could be friends in this way because a CVP does not equate vice and good, that is, like an incontinent person, they recognize they are acting wrongly. I concluded this chapter by determining that under Aristotle's account, a PVP has the capacity for character friendships.

There are two possible concerns that I have not addressed in this thesis as both impact the entirety of my argument, and we are now positioned to consider them. They are as follows: (1) *philia* is not just between two unrelated people as I have considered it in this paper, and (2) there is limited textual evidence to support a dual account of vice as Aristotle's view.

The first concern is that Aristotle's notion of *philia* is far more expansive than the modern notion of friendship, and I only considered friendship narrowly between two unrelated people. It is possible this could impact the overall argument if considering political

*philia* or *philia* within families. At most, this would mean Aristotelian friendships do not as a whole count as modern friendships. However, this is an avoidable concern since there is no single interpretation of modern friendship. For the sake of this paper, it was considered broadly, but just like *philia*, modern friendship is also something that is expansive and can encompass many relationships. That is, the modern notion of friendship can include a broad range of relationships, so even if we consider *philia* between families or multiple people it could still count as a modern friendship. Even if it is the case that Aristotle's notion of *philia* is, in its entirety, too broad to be called a modern friendship, *philia* as we considered it very narrowly can be called a modern friendship. This means that some of my argument still would stand, namely that aspects of Aristotle's *philia* do count as a modern friendship which vicious people can form, and thus vicious people can have Aristotelian friendships, which also count as friendships in the modern sense.

The second, and more important, concern is the lack of textual evidence to support a dual account of vice as Aristotle's own view. This is a large concern as the possibility of vicious character friendships rests on this duality of vice. I maintain my account is a strong interpretation of Aristotle's account of vice because it is charitable to Aristotle and allows us to understand *all* of his claims clearly. However, admittedly, there is a lack of textual evidence to prove that Aristotle was discussing two different kinds of vicious people. If my interpretation is not convincing, there remain the three common interpretations of Aristotle's vicious person. As we discussed in Chapter 1, there are three common interpretations of Aristotle's account of vice: (1) Aristotle's account of vice was inconsistent, (2) Aristotle was consistent, and any inconsistency can be dismissed by appealing to a single kind of vicious person (a CVP or a PVP), (3) Aristotle was describing a progression of viciousness, wherein

the vicious person begins as a PVP, and becomes a CVP later on. We will now consider each of these interpretations to see how accepting them as Aristotle's view instead of my interpretation would impact my overall argument.

First, we will consider the interpretation that Aristotle's account of vice is intentionally inconsistent to illustrate the confusing nature of vice. If we adopt this interpretation then it is not immediately clear if, or how, this vicious person would have friendships. If this interpretation is correct, then this would undermine the majority of my central claims in this thesis. If Aristotle was intentionally inconsistent and offered no clear or coherent account of vice, then it is impossible to defend any claims about whether his vicious people can have genuine friendships. However, this interpretation of Aristotle, defended most prominently by David Roochnik, is very much a minority view.

The second interpretation argues that Aristotle's account of vice is consistent, and he was illustrating a single type of vicious person. First, we will consider if we accept Aristotle's vicious person as a CVP, as Müller argues they are. This interpretation would undermine the majority of my argument because, as I argued, a CVP is not capable of character-based friendships. So, using my arguments from Chapter 2, this view would allow for vicious people to have genuine incomplete friendships, but limit them from having character friendships. On the other hand, if we accept a PVP interpretation, as Neilson supports, then the majority of my claims stand. On my interpretation PVPs are able to have friendships of all three kinds, so if we accept that Aristotle was outlining all vicious people as PVPs then they should have the capacity for incomplete and complete friendships. So, the majority of my central claims survive if we accept Neilson's interpretation.

Thirdly, we will consider the interpretation that Aristotle was presenting the stages of a vicious person, as Brickhouse argues. Brickhouse holds that the vicious person starts as a PVP and becomes a CVP. If we accept this interpretation, then the majority of my claims stand. The early stage of viciousness would allow for the vicious person to have incomplete and character friendships, just as we discussed a PVP having. Whereas the later stages of viciousness would make them unable to maintain a character friendship, but they could still have incomplete friendships, with some difficulty. Accepting a progression of vice account would not largely impact my overall argument, but it would weaken it. Instead of *some* vicious people being capable of having friendships of all three kinds as I have argued, it would be that *all* vicious people are capable of friendships of all three kinds, for a *limited* period of time, while in the PVP stage of vice.

I maintain that my interpretation that Aristotle was outlining two different types of vicious people is correct, as I argued in Chapter 1. But, as we have just discussed, even those who do not accept my interpretation can still accept many of my claims; for instance, my claims in Chapter 2 about incomplete friendships are not largely affected by the type of vicious person Aristotle presented. So, *many* of my claims survive even if we adopt a different interpretation of Aristotle's vicious person.

There are several important things to note regarding things I have not argued for or suggested. First, I am not arguing Aristotle thought that all PVPs will successfully have character friendships. Rather, I am only arguing that their viciousness does not necessarily strip from them the capacity for character friendships. I am also not suggesting that the *ability* to wish someone well for their own sake means vicious people will successfully do so. In fact, in my view, it is likely that many vicious people will struggle with this. My argument is

focused on the ability of a PVP to have friendships of all three kinds, this is not to say it is common. This thesis has focused on the *capacities* of vicious people for friendship, it has not considered how common these friendships would be, or how hard they would be to maintain. Finally, while I did touch on this, it is important to emphasize that I am not arguing vicious friendships are good. In fact, as I have said they are *vicious* and *inferior* to all other non-vicious friendships. I am also not arguing Aristotle thought vicious people could have character friends, only that it is an implication of his view if we accept my proposed dual account of vice as Aristotle's view.

In this thesis, I challenged the orthodoxy that according to Aristotle vicious people cannot have genuine friendships. I began by arguing that Aristotle was presenting two different kinds of vicious people, and any apparent inconsistency can be amended if we take his claims about viciousness to be referencing two distinct kinds of vicious people. I then argued that incomplete friendships of utility and pleasure involve well-wishing for the friend's own sake and that they are genuine friendships in Aristotle's view. I dedicated my final chapter to arguing that *some* vicious people, namely PVPs, are capable of having Aristotelian character friendships. Thus, on Aristotle's view vicious people have the capacity for genuine friendships.



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